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This booklet has been compiled in response to many requests, to record in permanent form the organization established within the Manitoba Division of the Canadian Red Cross Society to meet the 1950 Manitoba flood emergency.

It is hoped that this booklet may prove of value as a reference should another major disaster occur, in Manitoba or elsewhere.

FOREWORD

THE STORY of the flood in Manitoba of 1950 is one of tremendous courage, of hard-fought battle against the forces of nature, of weary victory snatched from the brink of disaster.

The flood was not the worst that Manitoba has seen. At least twice in the past has the river surged well over the thirty-foot mark, laying waste to hundreds of thousands of acres of verdant farmland, and flooding urban and rural dwellings. A certain amount of flooding has been accepted as inevitable in the prairie country bordering the Red River.

However, the flood of '50 was the worst that the modern city of Winnipeg has survived. Never before in the history of North America has it been necessary to have plans readied for the mass evacuation of a city of 300,000 people. Never before has a contest been waged for the rich prize that is a modern, industrial city.

The role that Red Cross was called upon to play in this situation was a monumental one, and one which was played successfully through the readiness of the organization to cope with disaster. The permanent staff of Red Cross, supplemented by thousands of volunteers, met the emergency with dogged persistence that often rose to heroic levels.

The Manitoba flood of 1950 revealed Red Cross operations in the midst of continuing crisis, organization made possible by the continued support of the people of this nation: people, who, by their contributions and voluntary efforts made the work of mercy in the 1950 flood a reality.

R. G. B. DICKSON
Chairman, Manitoba Division
CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

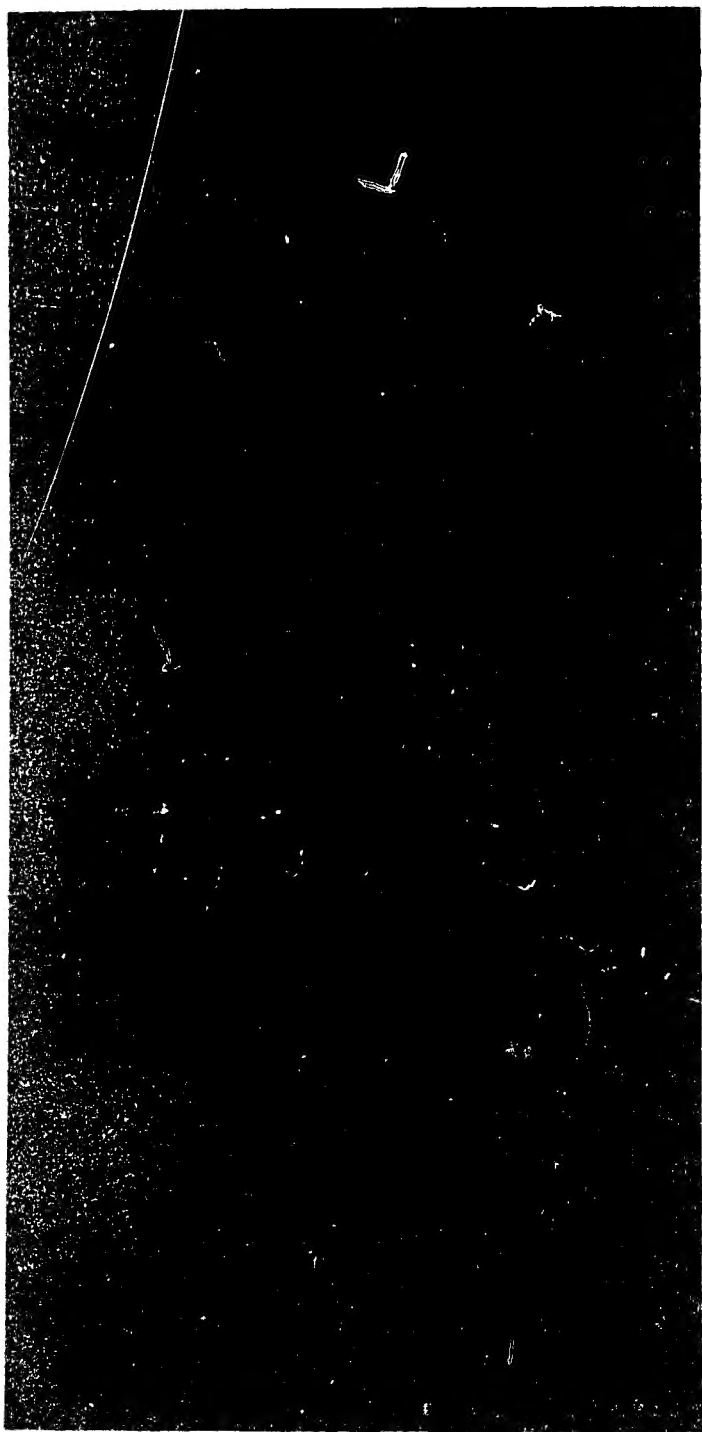
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"CALL 320"

A Documentary Record of THE 1950 MANITOBA FLOOD AND RED CROSS ACTIVITIES IN THE DISASTER



3-2-0 was the number allocated to the Red Cross emergency centre and will be remembered long by the many thousands to whom those numerals meant hope in the midst of disaster.



**SECTION
ONE**

The Flood of 1950

"The Flood of 1950 will not prove to be a permanent set-back to the continued prosperity of Winnipeg and Manitoba."

**Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent
May 22, 1950.**



BACKGROUND TO DISASTER



"Flooding of the Red River has been a problem since the area was first settled by white men . . . that we will have floods in the future appears certain from a study of the history of the past . . ."

W. D. Hurst, Winnipeg City Engineer
Paper on Red River Valley Flood Problem.
Delivered March, 1950.

THERE WAS promise of spring in Manitoba in 1950, and the broad sweep of prairie stretching back from the basin of the Red River was blanketed with a patchwork of melting snow. Farmers in the valley were planning crops, looking forward to setting the sharp edges of cultivating implements to the black soil. The entire land seemed to shake itself from the long, frigid lethargy of winter, preparing for the rush of activities that foretold bountiful crops.

Against this background of readiness, there had been a few indications that there would be flood in Manitoba. The many tributaries of the river were still locked in icy sheaths; the entire area drained by the Red River had experienced heavy winter snows which followed an early freeze-up. These streams would soon be swollen with the annual runoff of an area stretching through the entire southwestern section of Manitoba, and across three great northwestern American states. Two years previously, Manitoba had experienced fairly acute flooding conditions and signs pointed to flood in 1950.

The geographical peculiarities which make the Red River valley scene of recurring flood had been graphically described during the winter by W. D. Hurst, Winnipeg city engineer. In a paper delivered before the Winnipeg branch of the Engineering Institute of Canada he had appraised disastrous floods in the past and outlined their cause.

One statement made by Mr. Hurst at that time assumed particular significance to many of those who read his remarks, carried extensively in the press. Summing up flood signs, the engineer said:

"The conditions giving rise to a flood in the Valley are quite definite and are as follows:

"A cold winter, starting early with a little snow at first so that the ice on rivers and lakes will be abnormally thick, followed by a heavy snow-



fall throughout the country with continued cold weather. Then a late, cold spring, so that little snow escapes into the rivers. Then in May, and not usually before, a sudden change of the wind to the south so that the whole mass of snow melts at once, precipitating its vast volume of water into every stream. If such a combination of events comes after a few wet years, when stream and slough are filled with water and the ground itself saturated, then a real catastrophe is imminent."

There was little doubt that the situation in the valley was almost tailor-made to these requirements. As spring wore on and the temperature continued well below freezing, a pall of expectancy spread throughout the flood area.

PATTERN OF FLOOD DEVELOPS

Some flood preliminaries were taken early in April. Warning of coming trouble in Manitoba was evident in press and radio reports of flood below the border. A general thaw, with intermittent wet snowfalls, was reported from Minnesota and North Dakota. Drainage of the area into the Red River of the North and its smaller tributaries was hampered by low temperatures to the north, and an immense reservoir of water backed up, creating flood conditions in American communities.

By the end of the second week in April, the situation was critical. Many thousands had been driven from their homes as rivers surged over their banks, spreading throughout towns and cities of the Dakotas. Farms were isolated. Great stretches of farmland, waiting spring planting, drowned in icy flood waters.

The situation to the north in Winnipeg had not reached any point of crisis at this time, although the entire valley watched the restless river with anxious eyes. On April 17, a 12-inch rise was recorded at the Winnipeg measuring station, bringing the river level to within seven feet of flood level.

But below the border, at Wahpeton and Fargo, North Dakota, the river had risen to nearly eight feet above flood stage. Minnesota's governor, Luther Youngdahl, realising that a potential disaster faced his state, sent a plea to government authorities in Washington asking a \$25,000.00 flood control grant.

On April 18, exactly two weeks after first reports of flooding in the valley, a major flood had developed in the United States. American National Red Cross declared a state of emergency, established relief centres in four cities. An estimated 1,280 families were homeless, and in Jamestown, N.D., 400 families were evacuated in the worst flood in that city's history. Miles of electric and telegraph lines were swept away and traffic by rail and highway ground to a halt as the flood swept across roads and rail lines.

The familiar pattern of impending disaster had started to emerge. Reports reached Winnipeg of evacuation of hospitals, nursing homes, schools and entire farm communities below the border. Trains were derailed, trucks and cars trapped on the highways. Property loss rose with the river level.

OF THINGS TO COME

While these events were occurring in the United States, Winnipeg prepared for what was to be the greatest flood in its history. Early in the

crisis, before any pattern of flood had developed in Winnipeg, authorities at all levels had appraised facilities to meet the flood. Despite the optimistic view taken by some public officials that the river would not exceed 25 feet, many agencies had estimated the possible need for emergency measures and Red Cross planned a meeting of leading officials and organizations to consider steps to be taken in the event of a crisis.

While the river's rise could be measured in inches in Winnipeg, it had climbed several feet at Morris, Man. This town had borne the brunt of flood two years previously and flood fighting operations had been undertaken. Diking was begun around key buildings and the rise in the river heralded further disastrous changes that were to render the town completely untenable.

A sudden flash flood in Morden, Man., offered a preview of coming events, although there was no direct connection between this event and the Red River flood. Workmen, freeing a jam of ice in the spillway of the Cheval Creek dam planted a charge of dynamite. Pent-up waters, released by the blast swept through the town. Twenty-five families were marooned by a five foot tide of water which caused greater damage than any flood in the previous decade.

FLASHBACK SHOWS EARLY PREPARATIONS

As early as April 12, flood warning notices had been posted in Winnipeg and provincial engineers met on that date to draft flood fighting measures and assemble equipment for blasting, earth-moving, diking and pumping. In low-lying city areas the long, back-breaking job of building dikes against the encroaching flood was begun shortly after this date.

On Friday, April 14, the Red Cross Manitoba Disaster Services Committee took the initiative in calling a meeting to which representatives of many groups were invited. Haunted by uncomfortable memories of the inundation of Winnipeg in 1948, officials determined that any flood in 1950 would be met with an organized emergency effort. Toward this end representatives of the armed services, social and public agencies, I.O.D.E., Salvation Army, St. John Ambulance Association, provincial and civic governments met to discuss the flood.

Frank Carpenter, chairman of the Red Cross disaster services committee, told 35 officials at this meeting that appeals for assistance had been received from flooded or threatened communities. From the town of Emerson had come an appeal for hip waders and boats; from Morris an appeal was received for tank cars of drinking water, and it was an accepted fact that the situation would become steadily worse.

However, the flood meeting revealed that much apparatus was available to grapple the flood. More than 150,000 sandbags were promised by the army and it was disclosed that army amphibious vehicles, bedding, pumps, signals equipment and manpower were available.

Dr. C. R. Donovan, provincial health representative, outlined plans to channel requests for pure water to railways and for supplies of immunization serums through his department. Railway spokesmen offered tank cars for drinking water as well as rolling stock which might be needed for the essential movement of persons and property. A general over-all effort emerged as officials discussed the impending disaster.

At this time a co-ordinating committee was established, headed by Mr. Carpenter.

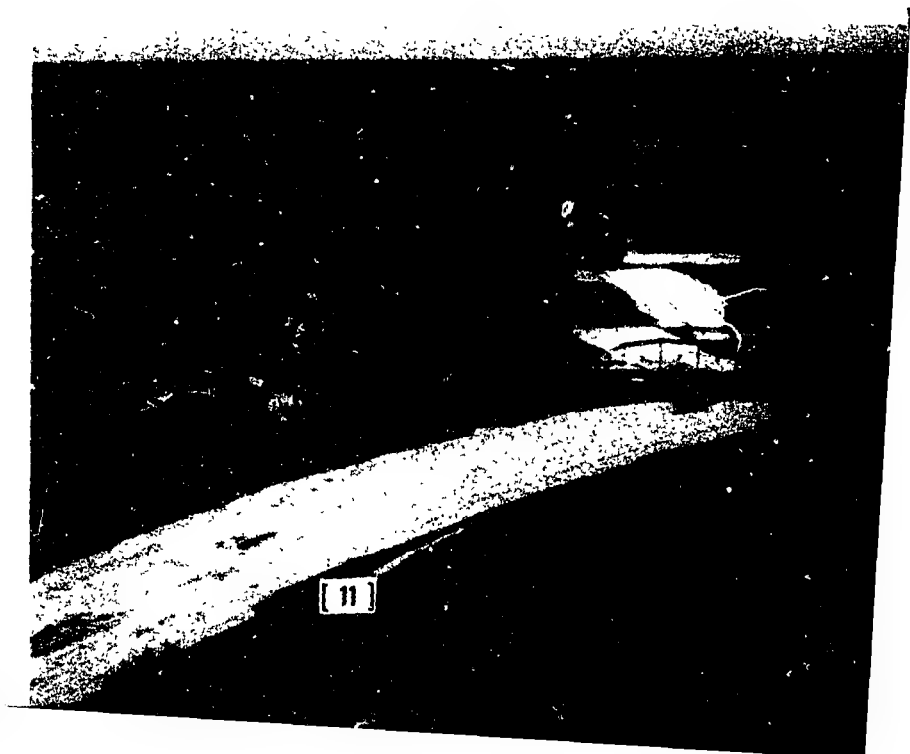
Members on this committee were: **representatives of the province of Manitoba, deputy health minister Dr. C. R. Donovan; W. D. Hurst, Winnipeg city engineer; Dr. M. S. Lougheed, Winnipeg medical health officer; Lieut.-Col. R. B. Haley, representing the three armed services; Mayor George C. MacLean, St. Boniface; Mayor Rupert F. Wightman, St. James; Mayor C. J. Lyon, West Kildonan; Mayor R. L. Fennell, Fort Garry; Mayor Elswood F. Bole, St. Vital; R.S.S. Wilson, R.C.M.P. Superintendent; F. W. Watkins, St. John Ambulance Brigade; J. C. Harwood, executive commissioner, Boy Scouts; R. G. B. Dickson, president, Manitoba Division Red Cross; J. F. Baldner, John Payne, T. M. Miller, Red Cross Disaster Committee; R. H. Snyder, Manitoba Red Cross Commissioner; and press and radio representatives.**

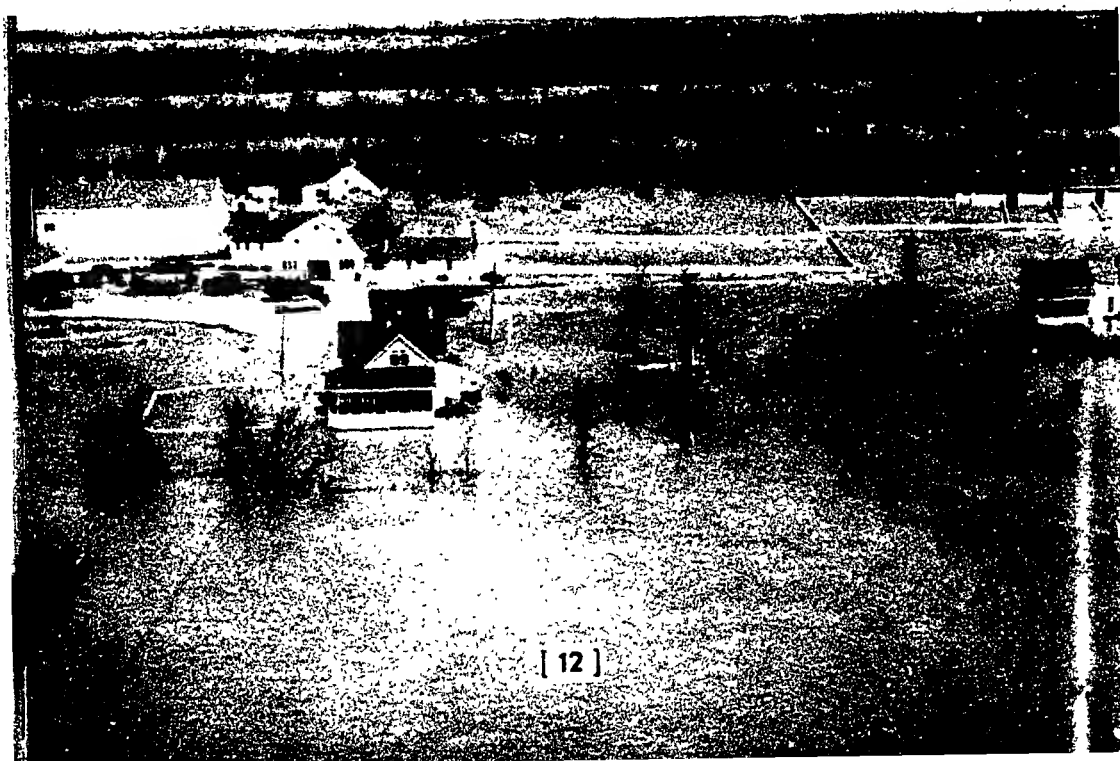
The flood had moved into Canada. New thousands were reported homeless in North Dakota and Western Minnesota, but Manitoba towns were now feeling the brunt of the river. As a short spell of warm weather descended on the province, tributaries of the Red River surged over their banks, and towns well-known to Manitobans became victims. Rosenfeld, Horndean, Altona, Gretna, St. Jean Baptiste fought flood conditions.

On April 20, a banner headline announced flooding of the border town of Emerson. As this news placed the flood almost at Winnipeg's doorstep, the civic engineering department warned of flooding within the city in two days. Emergency diking at low-lying city points was accelerated and the city girded itself to meet the test of flood.

A note of preparedness was sounded by Roy H. Snyder, Commissioner of Manitoba Red Cross, who told a flood meeting, "The last time we didn't get organized until the water was up to our chins. This meeting was called so that won't happen again."

These words sounded the note of readiness evident throughout Winnipeg as resources of Canada's fourth city were readied for the greatest fight against flood in Canadian history.





BORDER

INCIDENT

2

"Emerson has the appearance of a ghost town . . . Store windows are boarded up and many shopkeepers are preparing to close down . . . Tension is mounting as the flood crest nears."

**Winnipeg Free Press
Eyewitness Report**

BY APRIL 21 it was plain that the town of Emerson faced the threat of isolation. Water had been reported sweeping across highways linking this border town with St. Jean and Letellier. The river, creeping upward, had risen 30 inches in 24 hours.

This rise continued at the rate of one inch per hour and citizens of the town, recalling experiences of 1948, started to shift property from lower-lying areas. Diking was commenced around the town's telephone exchange to protect communications.

In response to a call for assistance, box-cars for storage of furniture and personal property were sent to Emerson from Winnipeg. A number of tank cars, each containing 7,000 gallons of fresh water, were spotted in the town against the pollution of local supplies. Four box cars, nine bunk cars, and one cook car were sent from Winnipeg to supplement rolling stock spotted in Emerson, and five tourist cars, outfitted for cooking and sleeping were readied in Winnipeg yards.

Manitoba's premier, D. L. Campbell, announced publicly that government departments were geared to assist in the alleviation of distress, and the provincial agricultural department issued instructions to farmers and rural dwellers designed to aid in the protection of homes, health and property. In the city of Winnipeg, W. D. Hurst, city engineer, issued a statement advising citizens to take immediate steps to protect health and property in the community.

A six-man army team was sent to Emerson from Winnipeg military headquarters to assist local people in the fight against the flood, and the first emergency shipment of 600 pounds of beef was shipped to Emerson.



FIRST FLOOD DEATHS REPORTED

South of Winnipeg, the air vibrated to explosions as dynamite crews blasted ice jams to free the channel for passage of the swollen river waters. Army officials flew over the flood area, appraising the general situation throughout the valley and estimating the threat to Winnipeg.

On April 22, the first Canadian flood victim was reported. In Morris a 41-year-old man, Roland Sicotte, was drowned when the boat he was using capsized and threw him into the river. His death occurred within a few hours of that of the second flood victim on that day, a farmer in Argyle, Minn., who was electrocuted when he touched a collapsed power line.

Along the course of the river there existed no doubt that the flood crisis had arrived. Water had spilled into the suburbs of St. Vital. Backyards on Scotia Street, in North Winnipeg, had disappeared beneath the first trickling overflows, and the city's downtown substations were being sandbagged to protect high-tension equipment. The normally serpentine path of the river was straightening out and it had broadened in many places to a lake that covered thousands of acres of farmland with a blanket of silt-laden water.

The first flood crest swept into Emerson on April 22, herding before it hundreds of evacuees from adjacent American communities seeking refuge in the Canadian town. Many in automobiles found highways severed, and the broadening tide tore at concrete and asphalt roads, creating havoc.

A newspaper account written from Emerson caught the mood of the community. "At the present time, waters from the Red River are lapping at the hotel . . . in the small telephone office four young operators are preparing to live at their posts . . . Emerson has the appearance of a ghost town. Store windows are boarded up and many shopkeepers are preparing to close down . . . Tension is mounting as the flood crest nears . . ."

Emerson did not suffer alone. As the river crept upward, the town of Morris was engulfed, its dikes smashed. Spreading across flat prairie, the

river cut railway links to the south and isolated community after community.

A major fight to save rail communications to the south was undertaken by the railways. Carloads of crushed rock, sand and cinders were thrown into the teeth of the flood. Section hands and emergency workers diked the thin ribbon of steel stretching through the flood area. This fight was to continue throughout the entire period in many areas, and a monumental task was performed by the two railway companies in keeping communications open during the crisis. Although water stood seven feet deep along sections of the right of way by this time, workers labored beneath these walls of water behind dikes thrown up to protect track.

WEATHER IS FLOOD ALLY

Highly unseasonal weather also plagued flood fighters. In the city of Winnipeg there was an announcement on April 25 that steam heating service would be discontinued due to flooding of the system. The two power utilities, and the government telephone system, threw men and materials into the fight to maintain essential service. Rain, snow, and flood itself, combined to harrass workers, and an additional anxiety was added by the realization that snow and rain falling throughout the area would add to the volume of water coursing down the river.

By the end of April, the focus of flood fighting activities shifted with dramatic suddenness to the city of Winnipeg. An imposing army of men, machines and materials were marshalled against the flood. Much of the rural area south of the city had already been abandoned. Mass evacuation was the rule. One by one, towns and municipalities along the course of the river were overwhelmed as the elements fed the rising tide. The city of Winnipeg and its surrounding municipalities settled down to the long and arduous task of saving as much of the community as was possible.

The southern outskirts of the city stood at the edge of an immense scene of desolation that stretched for 70 miles to the American border. Cars, tractors, and trucks stood abandoned on highways, their frames rusting in muddy water. Binders, cultivators, seeders and other implements of many types were mired in flooded fields. The few cattle which had not




THE FIGHT FOR WINNIPEG



"Everything in Winnipeg was subordinated to fighting the flood. Men, women and children worked on the levees day and night filling hundreds of thousands of sandbags to hold back the flood waters. The co-operation which existed between all groups fighting the flood or assisting evacuees was beyond praise . . ."

**Colin Herrie, Administrator,
Disaster Services,
American National Red Cross**

 **I**N MAY 1, the Red river at Winnipeg stood at 23.3 feet above datum, a scant 1/10th foot below the peak of 1948. The rising water had been greatly accelerated by general snow and rain throughout the valley, and it had increased more than a foot in the previous 24 hours.

The entire city, waiting for the fury of the river to strike, worked day and night building ramparts against rising water. Reports from the south, eyewitness statements by evacuees, press accounts all revealed a picture of abject desolation.

Meteorological reports promised little relief. The weather office warned of new snowfalls, new rain. At this point the dice were loaded in favor of the river.

In St. Vital's Kingston Crescent-Kingston Row area, water lapped dangerously close to the top of dikes. A call for assistance was issued by Mayor E. F. Bole, urging citizens from all parts of the city to help. Army officials, gearing for what was to become a major battle within a few days, sent 94 officers and men from Camp Shilo.

In West Kildonan the river penetrated deeper and deeper into residential sections as dikes crumbled. Wildwood, in Fort Garry, stood behind dikes holding back more than five feet of water. By May 3, despite the herculean efforts of flood fighters, the river still gained. New heights of 24.1 feet were measured, and reports from threatened areas became more alarming. In St. Vital alone, 60 homes had been isolated and outbuildings within Winnipeg had been carried away.

The Royal Canadian Air Force, moving to supply needed manpower, sent 24 men into West Kildonan for flood duty. Kildonan Park and the municipal golf course were under seven feet of water in many places by this time.



From all areas in the province, pledges of assistance funnelled into the city.

Red Cross announced that an immediate survey would be undertaken to ascertain emergency canteen requirements. The Salvation Army mobile canteen was operating on the dikes. The premiers of Ontario and Saskatchewan sent offers of assistance to provincial authorities. From the summer resort, Winnipeg Beach, the mayor offered accommodation for evacuees until opening of the regular summer season, while from Dauphin, Man., came an offer to supply immediate needs of food and clothing and additional needs of food in the post-flood period. The list of voluntary offers grew as Canada opened its heart to the need for aid in Manitoba.

FLOOD SMASHES DIKES

The first critical situation to develop in Winnipeg took place in Wildwood. There, residents had labored for weeks to erect a massive dike to protect their homes. The flood barrier stretched for almost two miles through shrubbery and trees bounding the river, stood almost 10 feet high in places and 35 feet in width. Along this barrier, day and night, a vigil was maintained by residents. The dike, built at a cost of more than \$10,000.00 to residents and the community, held back the river, forming a wall around the modern housing development.

Early on the morning of May 6, this work of many weeks was washed away in a matter of minutes. The steady pounding the dikes had absorbed took its toll and the crumbling dike sent a wall of water through Wildwood. Three hundred families were driven into the cold night from homes rapidly submerged in swirling water.

As if warning of things to come, the day that followed proved to be one of the most eventful in the history of the flood. The government of

the province acted with a sweeping measure. In a specially prepared statement, Premier D. L. Campbell declared a state of emergency. Brigadier R. E. A. Morton, general officer commanding prairie command, was immediately declared direction officer. This decision had been reached almost at the moment that many of the city's dikes crumbled beneath the flood.

At the same meeting, arrangements were completed for evacuation of hospital patients in Fort Rouge. These patients were shifted to the Department of Veteran's Affairs hospital at Deer Lodge, at the city's extreme west end. Warnings were issued at the same time to residents of Wildwood, Fort Rouge, Riverview, Glenwood Crescent, Lyndale Drive and the City of St. Boniface to be prepared to evacuate their homes on short notice. Over the whole situation loomed the frightening possibility of dikes protecting these areas collapsing.

It was decided that should a state of extreme emergency arise, the siren atop the Free Press Building, at the city's centre, silent since air-raid exercises during the war, would sound warning to the city. With stolid but imaginative realism, military authorities silently undertook sweeping plans for the total evacuation of the city's quarter-million population if the river should pass a height of 32.5 feet above datum. This operation, later revealed as "Operation Blackboy", represented the first time in history that a disaster had necessitated drafting of plans for the clearing of an entire metropolitan area.

FLOOD CHIEF SWINGS INTO ACTION

Brig. Morton assumed immediate command of the situation and issued a statement carried on a network of radio stations and in the press urging complete co-operation with the armed forces. He noted that Red Cross would continue to handle pleas for emergency aid to flood victims, while flood emergency authorities would be responsible for the material fight against the flood.



Red Cross, working to ease the discomforts of evacuees, threw its entire organization behind the army leader. R. G. B. Dickson, Manitoba Division president, told the city that "housing accommodation and food had already been provided for approximately 300 evacuees from flood areas. More than 1000 pairs of waders had been loaned on request from municipalities."

In addition, he noted that thousands of requests for aid were being channelled to proper sources by Red Cross, and said that Red Cross would continue to do its utmost to meet the emergency.

On the heels of these dramatic happenings, A. J. Taunton, assistant city engineer for Winnipeg, announced that the city had lost its battle with the river. "Every dike in the city but one has been broken. The course of the flood has changed from the defensive to the relief stage," he said.

He announced that the city's resources had been exhausted by the tremendous battle put up and that no attempt could be made to repair broken dikes. A total of eight dikes had collapsed during the wind and rainswept night of May 5-6 which preceded these critical developments.

FLOOD CLAIMS ST. VITAL WORKER

On this "Black Saturday" too, Winnipeg's sole flood fatality occurred. Alfred Ogg, St. Vital volunteer flood worker, was drowned in an Elm Park home when a surging wall of water from broken dikes battered in the door of the house in which he was working and swept him to his death in the cellar.

In Point Douglas, a densely populated area fronting one of the great bends in the Red River, collapsing dikes released a wave of water which swamped more than 35 homes.

AIRLIFT AIDS CITY'S PLIGHT

Flood authorities were preparing facilities of the city for a last-ditch fight, although the city had been declared at the mercy of the river. As the armed services moved into the picture in force, the R.C.A.F. commenced its "Operation RedRamp", a giant airlift of flood emergency materials and evacuees. Trans-Canada Air Lines swung into action with a similar emergency operation which was to involve hundreds of hours, a majority of its Winnipeg employees, and thousands of air miles. Public utilities, including transit, electric, telephone, and railways, readied themselves for their part in the fight against disaster.

The R.C.A.F. operated giant four-engined North Star aircraft, two helicopters, and Dakota DC-3 "workhorses" out of Winnipeg. A total of 35 aircraft were in operation during "RedRamp". To enable flood authorities to gain a clear picture of the entire area, R.C.A.F. immediately commenced an aerial survey of the valley, and from these photographs, four large mosaic maps were prepared covering the area from the border to Lake Winnipeg. Two of the mosaics were 36 feet long, scaled 4 inches to the mile, and two were 9 feet long, scaled 1 inch to the mile.

Trans-Canada Air Lines also stepped into the picture, establishing a flood material collection centre in Toronto. Flying on a round-the-clock basis was started, and a mountain of emergency material was flown into the city. Sandbags, urgently needed, received top priority, while other

shipments included pumps, rubber supplies, medical supplies and similar essentials.

Radio communication was geared to meet the situation. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation officials undertook to provide radio coverage and emergency communications in the event of a major crisis. The 50,000-watt CBC transmitter was put on 24-hour service. Complete facilities were placed at the disposal of government and flood authorities. A local network, linking the city's four stations and CKSB, St. Boniface, was set up. Stations CKRC, CKY, and CJOB also went on 24-hour duty, making facilities available to officials and the general public.

The need for such tremendous organization becomes clear when it is realised that an area comprising more than 560 square miles was under water at the height of the flood, some 400 square miles being under water or immediately threatened by May 6, and the advance elements of the 80,000 persons affected directly by flood were pouring into the city. In the city an estimated six square miles was under water and volunteers were fighting to save a further ten square miles of city and suburbs under threat.

FLOOD FIGHT OF PRIME INTEREST

The fury of the river, rushing floor high over city bridges was causing considerable difficulty. Crashing debris at Norwood bridge smashed telephone cables, cutting communications with St. Vital and Norwood. A tally revealed that 885 homes in the city had been evacuated and dikeworkers were erecting ramparts of sandbags at the city's many bridges in an attempt to keep intercity communications open. The R.C.A.F. prepared temporary housing facilities in abandoned barracks at Stevenson Field, while T.C.A. personnel across the field were similarly engaged in disused buildings there.

Red Cross, meanwhile, was working to keep ahead of the growing volume of evacuees pouring into the city. Flood centres, receiving evacuees and providing temporary accommodation, were set up at H.M.C.S. Chip-pawa, University of Manitoba buildings in Fort Garry, many city hotels, and other private and public buildings.

By May 8, the river had risen to 27.9 feet above datum, and more troops were sped to the city from the west coast. A fight which was to make history was being waged along the curving stretch of Lyndale Crescent, where a 7-mile dike was built to protect hundreds of residences. A special bus service, carrying an average of 5,000 volunteers each 24 hours, was established from the Free Press building by Moore's Taxi Ltd. and continued as a public service throughout the crisis.

4,000 PEOPLE . . . 2,000 HOMES

The toll of lives and homes affected by the flood was rising. By this time an estimate of flood consequences showed that more than 4,000 persons and 2,000 homes had been affected in the city. In the deserted streets of flood areas, squads of volunteer special constables and police officers patrolled to guard against looting of abandoned premises.

On May 8, as newspapers warned of an approaching flood crest and weather officials dolefully warned of new rain, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent told the House of Commons in Ottawa that his government would



give flood assistance to the people of Manitoba on the same basis as aid had been given to the people of British Columbia following the 1948 flood. This confirmed a promise that Defence Minister Brooke Claxton had intimated would be given when approached by press reporters in Ottawa some three weeks previously.

The human side of the news gave some indication of the amazing resilience of the people in the face of crisis. Thousands of Winnipeggers, joined by many evacuees from flooded areas, labored on the dikes day and night.

Grim humor was reflected in the odd occurrences that took place during evacuations. A woman, removed from a home in St. Vital took only the coveted curling trophy she had won a few months previously, leaving clothing, money, jewelry and other valuables to the mercy of the flood . . . an old age pensioner, one of a group evacuated from a rest home, refused to leave until a battered alarm clock had been safely removed from his room . . . a woman, defying flood authorities had to be forcibly removed from her home in a threatened area because she refused to believe that a threat to her home existed . . . a couple, working on the dikes, returned home to find their residence in a sea of water, returned to do another shift . . . an evacuee who came to Winnipeg from a rural area, brought only an empty metal breadbox, the first thing he had grabbed when evacuated.

Meanwhile knowledge of the scope of Manitoba's disaster was spreading. Wild rumors also spread, a factor which was to cause considerable difficulty for Red Cross during the flood period and for many weeks afterward.

Vice-Admiral H.T.V. Grant, chief of Canada's naval staff, returned to Ottawa after visiting evacuees in Winnipeg's H.M.C.S. Chippawa, declared the situation "the most catastrophic flood ever seen in Canada." Public figures throughout the country urged immediate declaration of a state of national emergency.

The story of the flood grew as it spread. Newspaper in Los Angeles told of the entire city being washed away by flood. A report in Scotland had the city's main intersection 30 feet below the flood. A radio commentator in New York announced that the entire population of Winnipeg had been evacuated.

Visiting newspaper men, pouring into the city from all major cities in Canada, and from leading news services in the United States, told of being warned to bring supplies of food and water adequate for their needs for the duration of their stay as none were available locally.

Despite these exaggerated reports, Winnipeg's plight was serious. More than 1,000 homes and public buildings were without heat; mass evacuation was in progress in St. Vital as both the Red and Seine Rivers went on new rampages; a positive threat to the city power stations existed, while surface transportation to many areas was wiped out. Rail linkage provided one of the few means of direct transit to St. Boniface from the city, and more and more the creeping river represented paralysis to the city's life.

NEW MANPOWER SOURCE TAPPED

On May 9, while weather forecasters predicted clearing weather, the army called up its local reserves, putting 14 units on active service in the city. Brig. Morton requested employers having reservists on payrolls to release them for the period of the emergency. This brought into play a new manpower force of some 3,000 men in three services.

Meanwhile, evacuations were proceeding. From Glenwood Crescent the evacuation of 200 persons was ordered, Grandin district, in Fort Garry, was cleared of approximately 700, while 53 children were removed from Children's Hospital, bringing total hospital evacuations to more than 1,000.

Flood authorities, appraising the future, warned that the crisis was likely to continue for four weeks, with a peak expected of 32 feet above datum, a high of 14 feet above minimum flood conditions.

On May 9, Red Cross enlarged operations to a national disaster basis. Flood Relief operations moved from new Red Cross headquarters at 226 Osborne Street N. to larger quarters in Winnipeg's block square civic auditorium. Main floor of the auditorium was set up as a reception centre for evacuees, with sleeping facilities for more than 250 persons. Administrative functions were established in the building's basement.

R.G.B. Dickson, Manitoba Red Cross president, was named head of the newly-organized relief effort and Frank Carpenter, Red Cross disaster chairman, continued supervising the broadened effort. A central exchange, with 40 trunk lines, was established with the telephone number 320, and Red Cross commenced a major flood effort which made history in the annals of its work on this continent.

WOMEN, CHILDREN ASKED TO EVACUATE

The people of Winnipeg on May 10 heard an announcement which brought home the full seriousness of the disaster. In a carefully worded statement, Brig. Morton, speaking as flood relief controller, urged evacuation of all women and children from Winnipeg. To guard against panic, he emphasised that this request was an appeal, not an order. Evacuation, he pointed out, was designed to thin out the city's population and relieve overtaxed facilities. The spreading boundaries of the flood by now covered 540 square miles of Red River valley, and its levels continued to rise in the city.

It was estimated that 20,000 persons were moving out of St. Vital, where total evacuation had been ordered a few days previously. Estimates

of the number to comply with Brig. Morton's evacuation instructions ranged from a few thousand to 75,000 persons. Red Cross was working day and night to find outside accommodation as the city awaited what was potentially total disaster.

The staggering logistics of the flood fight were beginning to emerge. R.C.A.F. announced slowing down of its gigantic airlift.

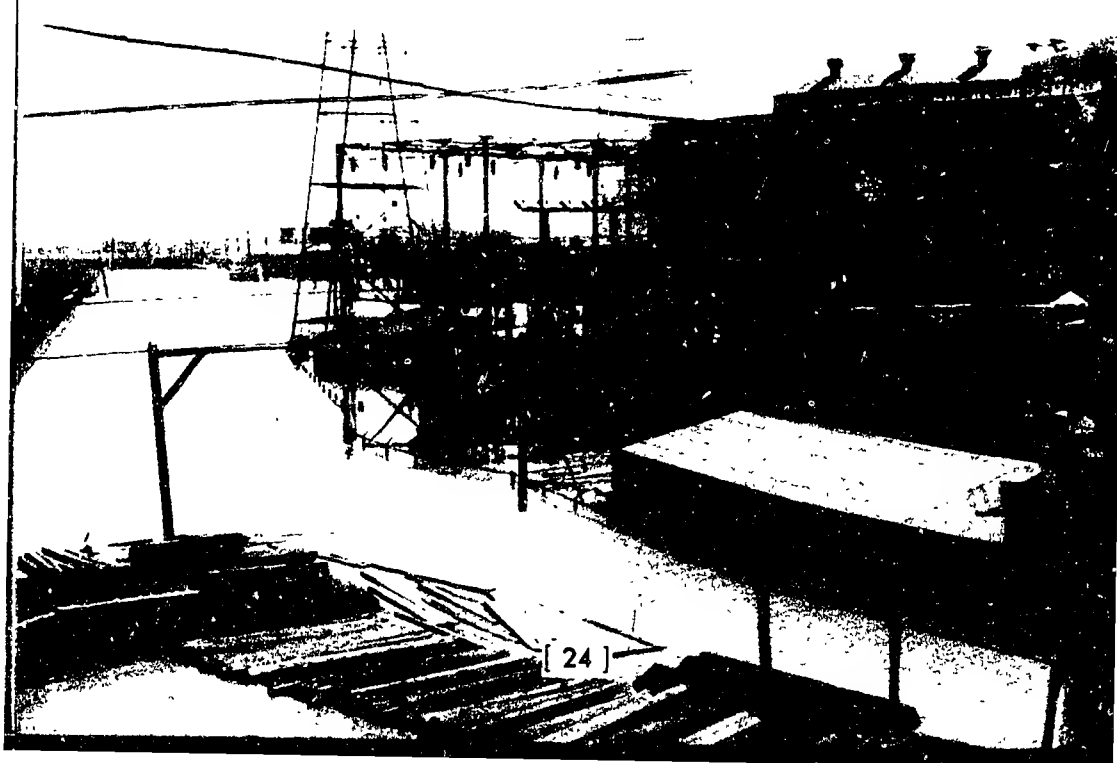
In the 96-hour period ending May 12, the R.C.A.F. had flown more than 1,000,000 pounds of freight, and this aerial bridge into the city had operated on a round-the-clock basis.

During a similar period aircraft of the Trans-Canada Air Lines had flown 58,000 air miles carrying equipment, and North Star aircraft chartered by the Ontario Lands and Forests department had brought 403,000 pounds of sandbags, hip boots, pumps and other equipment into the city. Many of these cargo ships, stripped down to carry maximum pay loads, were re-equipped with seats on out trips to carry evacuees to other centres.

As the shape of the flood battle emerged, it was revealed that more than \$100,000.00 had been spent on temporary causeways to meet emergency, to supply essential services to power stations and to keep bridges in operation. Thousands of truckloads of rock, gravel and sand were hauled to the location of emergency roads, and one causeway at the Water Street approach to Provencher Bridge was built at an estimated cost of \$20,000.00.

There was turn of optimism by May 14 as both power utilities announced that the flood threat to their installations was passed. Authorities of the Manitoba Telephone Service issued work that communications were holding up satisfactorily in spite of a record traffic volume.

With typically human optimism, many authorities were announcing detailed plans for the pumping out of flooded basements, restoration of household appliances, and sanitation of premises. In spite of the river level, most of the city felt high optimism that although the situation was grave the flood was licked.



... BUT, WE'LL WIN!

4

"What was accomplished was made possible by the determination and tireless efforts of each and every community. All have been truly magnificent . . . I say that without your efforts the accomplishment of a task of such magnitude would never have been possible."

Brig. R. E. A. Morton.
O.C. Prairie Command (Army)
Director of Flood Relief

IN MAY 13 Winnipeg resembled nothing more than a city under the onslaught of a ruthless invader. Of 80,000 persons who had vacated their homes, 60,000 were from the Greater Winnipeg area. 40,000 of these were from the city proper, according to estimates. Many of those who had left travelled as far as Vancouver and Montreal, while many others escaped to rural communities, farm homes and summer resorts within a few hours' travel of the city. The sick, infirm, aged, as well as a great number of well mothers and their families, had joined the trek. Railway platforms were jammed with many hundreds each hour as trains operated a day-and-night shuttle service out of the city.

In the face of this need, offers of accommodation flooded in from many places. Minnedosa offered quarters to 500; Neepawa, 600; Brandon, 1,200; Winnipeg Beach, 1,200; Pine Falls, 300; Rossburn, 300. Temporary accommodation was given to many others at Beausejour, Killarney, Winkler, Morden, and the great circle of communities on the periphery of the disaster area. Other offers came from Saskatchewan, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia as well as points in the United States.

On Saturday, May 13, another 20-block area in Fort Rouge was abandoned to the river and engineers and volunteers abandoned their fight at the approaches to Norwood Bridge. The river had risen to a new high of 30.1 feet above datum, and H. W. Harrich, member of the United States corps of engineers who had come to Winnipeg to assist, announced that "five hundredths of an inch rise in the river's level at this time is more important than five feet would have been a few weeks ago."

FLOOD GROUP IS NAMED

"This is by far the worst flood I have seen in the middle west," the American engineering expert declared after viewing the situation in the Valley.



A high key of optimism was reflected in the thinking of a majority of those fighting the flood. On May 13 too, two meetings of a committee organized to administer a flood assistance fund took place. A morning meeting was held in Winnipeg's City Hall, followed by an afternoon meeting in the legislative buildings. This fund, originally instituted by Winnipeg's mayor, Garnet Coulter, was known as the Manitoba Flood Relief Fund.

Officers of this group, which was to undertake the job of reimbursing those suffering loss by flood, were H. W. Manning, prominent Winnipeg business executive, administrative chairman; and R. F. McWilliams, K.C., lieutenant-governor; Premier D. L. Campbell; Mayor Garnet Coulter; Mayor George McLean, of St. Boniface; United States consul-general W. H. McKinney; as honorary chairman.

A general committee, later formed to undertake collection and distribution of the multi-million dollar fund, included representatives of the ministry, business and industry.

Hon. Brooke Claxton, Canada's defense minister, visiting the city, told officials that "the seriousness of the flood and the apparent property damage are far beyond what one could estimate from reports."

Viscount Alexander of Tunis, Canada's Governor-General, arrived and after a tour of the stricken area expressed deep sympathy with flood victims. He flew over the Valley, visited Red Cross headquarters to speak individually to flood sufferers and volunteer workers, trudged through the mud and silt of the urban area. His comments on that occasion expressed a great shock at the scope of the disaster.

A tenth of Winnipeg stood under water at this time, the number of evacuees from the metropolitan area had grown to 75,000. New thousands joined the throng of evacuees from the flood area.

On May 15, the first slight decline in the river's level was recorded at



the Winnipeg measuring station. After reaching a high of 30.3 feet on Saturday, the river dropped to 30.2 feet on Monday.

This indication that perhaps the crest of flood had been reached was not cause for undue jubilation, and flood officials warned against over-optimism. However, guarded statements that perhaps the high point had been passed were made.

Relief at a possible decline in the flood was tempered by a warning from weather officials that even a slight rainfall might send the level upward again, with what would be catastrophic results.

News of the giant evacuation plan for the city of Winnipeg had been intimated publicly. The river level at which the plan would be set into operation was 32.5 feet. It was revealed that if the water reached this height, the majority of Winnipeg's downtown area would be submerged, and large areas south of the Assiniboine and along the east bank of the Red would be inundated. Food and assembly points were planned along a line some two miles west of the river at the limit of the flood of 1826.

Meanwhile, flood officials issued warning against complacency. More than seven miles of dike held along Lyndale drive, an additional five miles of main and secondary bulwarks stood firm in Fort Garry. However, gusty winds were piling a great volume of water against these, and any breach would send tons of water surging through areas miles away from defence lines.

RED CROSS EMERGENCY CENTRE

The biggest and most dramatic of the relief jobs was under way in Winnipeg's civic auditorium, where more than 4,400 volunteer workers, under supervision of Red Cross personnel, were taking care of thousands of evacuees stranded in or passing through the city. Hundreds of thousands of phone calls and thousands of telegraphed enquiries relating to whereabouts of evacuees were being handled. Food and clothing for thousands

were distributed. Boats and waders were being supplied to flood fighters.

Without considering the immense toll of property loss due to the flood it was estimated that by May 16, \$4,000,000.00 had been spent fighting the river. Expense to the Manitoba government was gauged to be \$2,000,000.00, while cost to the city of Winnipeg was set at \$1,000,000.00, with a similar cost to surrounding municipalities.

Cost to the Ontario government for its voluntary assistance to Manitoba was estimated at \$150,000.00, while the cost of assistance given by small municipalities, and the other provinces could not be assessed, but was considered to be additional thousands.

The Federal and provincial governments, with an eye to reimbursing victims of flood when waters receded, were casting about for a committee of appraisers. Mayors and reeves of Greater Winnipeg held a series of consultations with provincial government officers to determine division of responsibility for flood rehabilitation. Red Cross had begun tentative planning for the post-flood period.

Even though the water level was holding steady at 30.2 feet above datum, uncertain future weather made officials plan evacuation of the city's patients. Dr. Athol Gordon, of the Red Cross Medical and Nursing section, noted that all services, hospitals, the medical profession and railway authorities were working with Red Cross to accomplish this end.

Planes left Winnipeg airfield on unique bombing missions. Spotted on high ground throughout the river valley stood isolated herds of livestock, doomed to starvation unless means were worked out to feed them. Aircraft, loaded with bales of feed, cruised the valley, dropping food supplies to these. The lives of many horses and cattle stranded by the flood were saved by this "Operation Haylift" which was undertaken by the humane Society.

BRISK TRADE IN DISASTER AID

Although business languished throughout the flood area, a brisk trade was carried on at the Red Cross emergency centre. Two canteens, sleeping accommodation, a nursery, medical division, transportation section made the building a "city within a city". Routine administrative tasks of the operation as well as maintenance of an incredibly accurate tracing system was carried on. Population of this "city" was made up of the many thousand volunteer workers assisting evacuated victims.

Meanwhile many evacuees were distributed throughout the country. This was made obvious by reports coming from schools as far east as Ottawa, Ont., and as far west as Vancouver, B.C. Students in other cities created a special problem and in Ottawa the collegiate advisory board approved special measures to admit flood evacuees. Similar action was taken in London, Ont., Vancouver, B.C., Calgary, Alta., Moose Jaw, Sask., and other points throughout the prairies and Ontario.

"THE DIKES WILL HOLD"

Civilian engineers, after surveying city dikes and the river's constant levels, cautiously announced that dikes, especially the seven-mile rampart along Lyndale Drive, would continue to hold. A resulting wave of optimism caused flood officials to announce that evacuation should continue. The city

population was also warned against a sense of false security, and urged to continue work on the dikes.

An early estimate of flooded homes revealed the devastation wrought by the flood. In Winnipeg, 10,000 homes were believed to have been affected, in St. Boniface, 4,300, in St. Vital, 4,000, in St. James, 200, Fort Garry, 700, West Kildonan, 600, East Kildonan, 500, North Kildonan, 200, Old Kildonan, 20, and West St. Paul, 35. This breakdown included all homes, from those with minor flooding in basements to those covered up to the eaves.

On May 20, after maintaining steady levels for more than a week, the river's level slipped downward. The drop amounted to little over one inch, but this recession was hailed as an optimistic sign. However, incidents of flood were still occurring. The town of La Salle, a few miles southwest of the city, was subjected to a minor crisis when a backup of water in the La Salle river washed out rail lines and isolated about 100 persons.

This event demonstrated that although the city stood safe behind its dikes and the declining river, the river's savagery was still untamed.

On May 22, while river levels continued to slip downward, Canada's Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent, made a one-day tour of the flood area. Travelling by plane, amphibious vehicle, and on foot, the Prime Minister saw first-hand the devastation wrought by the river and expressed admiration of the "indomitable spirit of both victims and flood fighters."



"I am happy to see that the western spirit of enterprise has not been materially affected nor altered by this flood," he said, and added he was convinced that "the flood would not prove to be a permanent set-back to the continued prosperity of Winnipeg and Manitoba."

He also expressed appreciation of the work of mercy done by Red Cross. He commented, following a surprise tour of Red Cross headquarters, that Red Cross machinery had done much to maintain the high morale displayed by Manitobans and had high praise for the Society's work throughout the disaster.

The almost immeasurable toll of the river was revealed as the flood receded. Water stood over thousands of acres of farmland, washing out the hope of crops planned for early planting. The town of Morris, by far hardest hit in the valley, echoed emptily to the activities of a growing number of its citizens who surveyed the shocking extent of damage and commenced the sad job of rebuilding. Throughout towns and communities along the river, people dug into mountains of silt, mud and debris, beginning the slow road back to normal life.

The river had passed its peak, each day that passed brought the valley closer to the end of flood conditions. The city of Winnipeg, although still under some threat, was safe behind its dikes, as were surrounding municipalities. The feverish, sometimes hysterical concentration on flood had moderated to sober appraisal of damage.

By the end of May although the aftermath of flood still posed a tremendous problem, attention shifted from defence to recovery, from rescue to salvage.

The people of the city and of Manitoba's hard-hit Red River Valley, looked at the tortured wreckage of their homes and their lands. Waiting for the river to return to its normal channel, they prepared for the immense courageous job of rehabilitation. Their feeling was that although the river had been beaten, a tremendous job was still to be done.

Weary and wet, Manitoba had won, but the scars of battle would take long months to erase. In many cases an indelible scar would be left, never to be wiped out. The greatest flood in Manitoba's history, affecting hundreds of thousands of acres of land, tens of thousands of people, and the first city of the prairies, passed into history.

The great Manitoba flood of 1950 had passed.



"OPERATION BLACKBOY"

5

"Never before in the history of this continent has a large city been faced with a disaster as serious as that now confronting Winnipeg. While we have had large disasters in the States—in both the Ohio Mississippi Valley floods of 1927 and 1937 over one million people were affected—the evacuation problem was simple compared with that at Winnipeg . . ."

Colin Herrie, Administrator,
Disaster Services,
American National Red Cross

IN MAY 30, details of a dramatic plan to evacuate the entire urban area under threat from flood were bared in the press. To that time little indication of the magnitude of the disaster facing the city had been given. The man on the street, working to save his home and his city, little knew by what narrow margin he escaped becoming part of an even more disastrous situation.

At 32.5 feet above datum, Winnipeg would have been faced with this situation:

- Central railway installation would have been inoperative.
- The warehouse area of the city, with its stocks of food and supplies would be inaccessible.
- Bakeries and dairies would be completely crippled.
- All means of communication would be blacked out.
- The water supply would be so crippled that it could not operate properly.
- Sanitary facilities would no longer exist.
- The entire population would be stranded in its homes without the facilities necessary to maintain itself.

In the face of this incredibly catastrophic situation, Army and public officials realistically began planning for its eventuality. Called "Operation Blackboy", and placed under direction of Brig. R. S. Malone, a plan was drafted to meet this situation.

Although the plan was never put into operation and remained on paper, its details were revealed to indicate the nature of the catastrophe the city faced. A situation unparalleled except in time of total war would

have developed. The city's entire population, and that of surrounding municipalities, totalling almost 300,000 persons would have been placed under strict discipline.

Had the plan gone into operation:

- Brig. R. E. A. Morton, Flood Control Director, would have been given complete administrative control of Greater Winnipeg.
- Three trainloads of food supplies, standing by in Winnipeg and St. Boniface, would be used to supply immediate needs.
- Winnipeg's normal gasoline consumption of 75,000 gallons per day would have increased to 300,000 daily as evacuation by air began.
- 40,000 persons a day would be moved out of the city by rail, air, and road.
- 75,000 men and women would be held in the city as a flood fighting force.
- Evacuees would be distributed to 200 centres in Manitoba and its neighboring provinces.
- Buildings would be commandeered to provide shelter to house emergency workers.
- All oil companies in the area would be converted to diesel power to operate pumps.
- An emergency lighting plant would go into operation.
- Radio taxis would be commandeered for use, as would loudspeaker trucks, ham radio stations and operators.
- A gigantic records system to keep track of the unprecedented number of evacuees would be set up.

This amazing plan was worked out as the river crept upward. Co-operating in its drafting were business men from many city establishments, military personnel and technically qualified persons. These men carefully inventoried food supplies in, and in transit to, the city, surveyed warehouse facilities for temporary storage, and carefully assessed transit and other facilities that would become part of the effort. This whole, detailed and completely workable plan was hammered out 48 hours after work had commenced on its drafting.

Three hundred copies of an improved outline of the operation were printed and distributed within another 24 hours.

The master evacuation plan, including large overlay maps, showed proposed zone headquarters, temporary shelters, alternate sites for fire-fighting and other emergency equipment, loading areas for railways, and all other information essential to its operation.

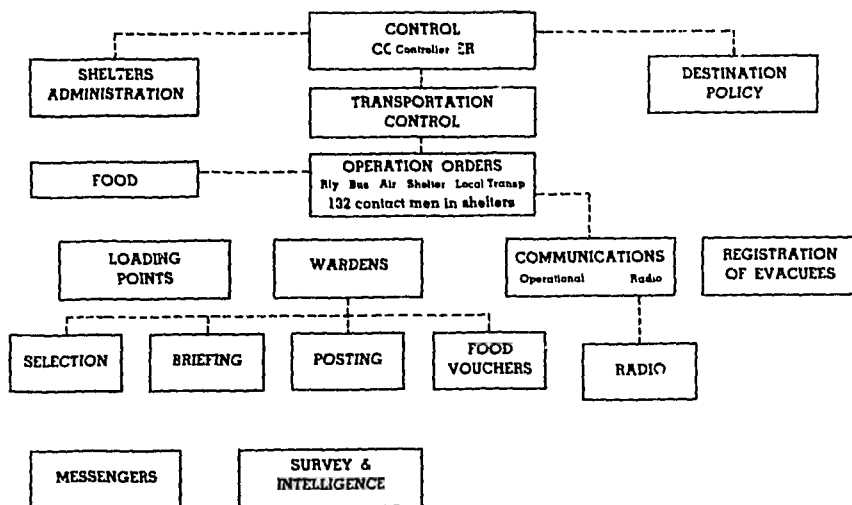
According to information contained in the plan itself, Blackboy was to go in effect only on direct order of the General Officer Commanding Prairie Command, in consultation with Premier D. L. Campbell.

Upon such authorization, the organization and executive steps of the plan would become operative immediately.

There were two alternative circumstances under which the plan would be put into effect. (a) if the water level rose to 32.5 feet above datum and wholesale evacuation of the city be indicated, or (b) if normal services within Greater Winnipeg broke down to such an extent as to constitute a catastrophe.

Had such action become necessary, under the supervision of a Central Control agency, sub-committees were to be established to take care of distribution of food, maintenance of general stores, petrol and oil, setting up of depots and distribution agencies, allocation of duties and manpower, control of evacuation, provision of emergency shelter, policing and fire protection, engineering services, medical services, trucking and transport, keeping open of communications and dissemination of information.

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF **OPERATION BLACKBOY**



Every conceivable problem that might arise during operation of the plan was anticipated, while steps were taken to refer such as could not reasonably be anticipated to a central control headquarters.

The city was divided into nine zones, each with its own zone headquarters. Within these zones feeding centres were to be established, shelters set up, and central control of trucking, manpower, and other services were to be arranged through the central authority.

The plan provided that city and municipal police would continue to function under their normal administration. Primary duties of this force would be the protection of persons and property with reinforcement coming, if necessary, from R.C.M.P., Canadian Provost Corps (Army), and by special constables.

Priority escape routes for evacuation of the city were charted, and control of these was placed under the direction of the police.

The plan also provided for the flying into Winnipeg of newspapers published in other cities if both local newspapers were discontinued or for joint publication if one or the other was discontinued.

Nature did not decree that this plan be put into operation. The flood, after reaching a peak of 30 feet plus, returned back to normal. Operation Blackboy was shelved, an everlasting reminder to Manitobans of the scope of disaster possible, and that its people out of their own energies and ingenuity could draw the means to save Winnipeg's identity even had total disaster struck.



"Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent Meets
Two Tiny Flood Victims at Red Cross
Headquarters."

**SECTION
TWO**

**Red Cross
AND THE
Manitoba Flood
of 1950**

"Throughout the past weeks the Red Cross has extended to the three Services the fullest and closest co-operation. Your organization has carried out many onerous and exacting tasks in a truly magnificent manner. The work of the Red Cross greatly simplified the many problems which faced the Services, particularly in respect to evacuation . . ."

**Brig. R. E. A. Morton.
Director of Flood Relief Control**



Above (L. to R.)
Dr. W. S. Stanbury
Viscount Alexander
Brigadier R. S. Malone
R. G. B. Dickson



Right
Frank Carpenter
Chairman, Disaster Committee



Report of the MANITOBA RED CROSS DISASTER COMMITTEE

WITH first reports of flooding in the United States early in April, 1950, the Disaster Services Committee of the Manitoba Red Cross considered plans to meet any recurrence of flood conditions in Manitoba. This committee, comprised of Mr. Frank Carpenter, chairman, and Messrs. T. M. Millar, J. F. Baldner, and John deB. Payne, met to plan against the coming disaster.

It was from this committee that, less than a month later, the nucleus of the Control Section of the Red Cross Flood Emergency headquarters in Winnipeg Auditorium was formed.

By mid-April, the situation at Emerson was grave, and Mr. Carpenter, committee chairman, rushed relief supplies, drinking water, boats and rubber boots and waders, to the town. At the suggestion of Mr. Snyder, Manitoba Red Cross Commissioner, officials at Morris and Emerson had held emergency meetings and appointed co-ordinating committees earlier in April. In both communities, precautionary measures were taken which included stockpiling of foodstuffs, shifting of personal properties, and





arranging for boxcars, sleeping cars, and other rolling stock to be spotted in the area.

As the flooding river rose to disastrous levels, preliminary relief measures were undertaken by Red Cross and Divisional Headquarters, on Winnipeg's Osborne Street, became the centre of the flood fight. It became necessary first to arrange for the mass feeding of dike workers, and within a short time, to arrange for the shifting and feeding of flood evacuees.

First arrangements for the canteen feeding of dike workers were made by Red Cross on April 24. It was decided to use the Winnipeg Canoe Club as a Red Cross canteen, with a Staff comprised of the regular employees of the Club's lunch room. A tent was erected adjacent to the club and coffee, sandwiches and box lunches were distributed to dike workers by the Boy Scouts. This arrangement was made possible through the co-operation of Mr. Arthur Mears, Commodore of the Club.

On the morning of April 29, Major Wm. Ross, of the Salvation Army, volunteered services of his Salvation Army unit to Red Cross. Scotia Street, north of the city, was now threatened with inundation and many dike workers were in the area. The Salvation Army, by arrangement with Red Cross, despatched a mobile canteen to the area to provide feeding services.

First evacuees to be handled by Red Cross arrived in Winnipeg in the morning of May 1. This group comprised several hundred evacuees from Morris, among whom were about 80 persons who had been unable to arrange accommodation in Winnipeg and who needed Red Cross assistance. Two Red Cross workers were sent to meet the train in St. Agathe, and when the train arrived in Winnipeg the evacuees were despatched by cab

and car to the Immigration Hall or McLaren Hotel, where temporary accommodation had been made available. Feeding of these persons was facilitated by the issuing of meal tickets provided by Red Cross.

Additional groups arrived from Morris on May 2 and 3, and the problem of providing shelter became acute. By May 5, facilities were overcrowded and the Disaster Services Committee arranged for placement of evacuees in H.M.C.S. Chippawa, Winnipeg's naval establishment.

Full co-operation was extended to the Disaster Service Committee by Lt. Commander Lorne Main, Commanding Officer of the Naval installation, and emergency sleeping and feeding accommodation was made readily available to meet the emergency.

Divisional headquarters, on Osborne Street, was by now the centre of emergency relief operations, and members of the Red Cross permanent staff, supplemented by volunteer workers, were working long hours under hectic conditions to meet the many demands which the situation created. Flood fighting apparatus, hip waders, work gloves, boats were being dis-



"Red Cross Officers Plan Flood Strategy: (l. to r.) Colin Herrie, American Red Cross Disaster Services Director; Col. Fred Miles, Saskatchewan Commissioner; Dr. W. S. Stanbury, Canadian National Commissioner; Roy W. Snyder, Manitoba Commissioner."

tributed to areas of need, and great quantities of food, donated by the public, had begun to accumulate in the lobby of the building.

Estimates of assistance required, and the extent of disaster services required, had been based on the expectation that the 1950 flood would not exceed a 25 foot high. However, by April 30, the flood had swept over the 1948 high of 23.4 feet, and by May 6th a situation of grave crisis had developed.


By this time, Dr. W. S. Stanbury, National Red Cross Commissioner, and Mr. Colin Herrle, Director of Disaster Services for the American National Red Cross, were in Winnipeg, giving their experience and guidance to the local disaster committee. Plans were drafted to shift operations from the overcrowded and overtaxed facilities of the Osborne Street headquarters. In a situation of growing and grave crisis, on May 9, Red Cross flood relief headquarters shifted to larger quarters in the Winnipeg Auditorium to begin a history-making phase of its service in a major disaster.



Volunteer Drivers at Red Cross Centre.

FLOOD RELIEF HEADQUARTERS

7

 ON MAY 9, at noon, Red Cross flood relief moved from its Osborne Street headquarters to Winnipeg's Civic Auditorium. The massive public building immediately became the nerve-centre of the great work of mercy. Flood-weary people of Winnipeg and surrounding municipalities, took heart from the fact that Red Cross, operating with quiet efficiency up to that time, was expanding its services to meet the disastrous situation.

Drawing on knowledge gained battling the historic Fraser River flood of 1948, and the lesser Manitoba flood of the same year, Red Cross flood relief swept into action on a greatly expanded scale. Thousands of volunteer workers (the number was to rise to 4,400) left jobs in factories, offices, and business establishments in the city; flood victims, defeated in attempts to save their own possessions; all rallied to help Red Cross fight what would obviously be a major battle.

Men, women, and children, from the inundated valley of the Red River, were billeted in the main auditorium. Mountains of stores and supplies were placed in improvised warehouse facilities on the stage and in the basement; in the roller rink downstairs, a city-block long area was set up as administrative headquarters.

The major problem was one of providing shelter for the unprecedented number of evacuees, and keeping relatives and friends advised of movement of evacuees. Evacuees, funnelling into Winnipeg, from a 560-square-mile area of the province, having abandoned their possessions to the river, had to be provided with food, clothing and shelter.

Tremendous immediate problems had to be faced. The task of fighting the actual flood, on the dikes, in the flooded areas was taken over by Army Flood Control, under the able leadership of Brig. R. E. A. Morton. This

headquarters marshalled and directed the men and materials necessary to do this important work.

A state of emergency had been declared by the province, followed by pledges of emergency assistance by federal authorities. As the river's level crept upward this organized flood-fighting headquarters grappled with the material battle against the river.

The problem of meeting and solving the situations created by the backwash of flood, the personal consequences of the crisis, was tackled by Red Cross.

Seventeen departments were established in Flood Relief Headquarters to deal with all aspects of the evacuee problems. The care and direction of thousands of homeless persons, broken families and material requirements of food, clothing and shelter were undertaken by Red Cross. Within a few hours, hundreds of volunteers undertook the many things to be done, and Red Cross Flood Relief headquarters was a living, working reality.

This singular undertaking had no direct connection with fighting the flood. Its task was one of relief, of assistance and service. The workaday problems of the crisis were methodically tackled. They were the simple essentials—sandwiches and coffee, dry clothing, beds for the homeless, transportation and storing of supplies, press relations, lost children, tracing of missing persons.

More complex problems were tackled in the evacuation of bed patients from hospitals, feeding cut-off communities, shifting of invalids, and the reuniting of families torn apart by the emergency.

This total effort represented one of the largest volunteer operations in the history of disaster in Canada.

As flood victims moved through Red Cross headquarters, they first approached the registration desk. Full particulars were taken here of each case and need determined.

Meal tickets, food and clothing requisitions were given out next to the registration desk. Meal tickets were provided to those not convenient to food distribution centres, while requisitions went to those in private homes.

Anything required in addition, medical service, transportation, emergency living quarters, and similar needs was recorded and immediate steps taken to fill the need.

Along each side of the main auditorium stood tables piled with clothing. From these supplies those in need drew articles required, and literally everything was available, from tiny diapers to bulky overcoats. The I.O.D.E. worked in close co-operation with Red Cross in collection and distribution of the clothing.

The entire floor of the auditorium was lined with 250 double-tiered bunks, providing temporary sleeping quarters for evacuees awaiting placement in Winnipeg homes or movement to emergency shelter outside the city. A canteen was located adjacent to these facilities for feeding temporarily billeted evacuees.

In the building the Red Cross first aid post was also located. This post was staffed by doctors and registered nurses. Here emergency assistance

and inoculation service was available to evacuees. A fully equipped nursery was also operated, providing experienced care and accommodation for infants.

The nerve centre of these many operations was the divisional headquarters of the Commissioner, operating through Control section. This department co-ordinated the entire effort, and served as the administrative leadership of the headquarters.

Red Cross control, made up of chairman of disaster services and members of the disaster committee, assumed operation of the entire effort through this section. This section was charged with over-all supervision of flood relief headquarters. It was this committee, expanded to meet the threat of catastrophe on May 9, which prior to that date directed disaster work in the Red River valley.

An accounting section, supervising all expenditures and account records pertaining to flood relief, was set up by Sill, Patrick and Company, divisional auditors for Manitoba Red Cross. This group kept track of the immense expenditures occasioned by the emergency, continuing for many weeks after the flood had returned to normal and victims had resumed life in their homes.

Two major problems confronted Red Cross. The tracing of displaced flood victims and provision of shelter for evacuees.

Two sections, Welfare Enquiries, and Evacuation and Shelter, performed these related functions. The former handled all requests and supervised all records relevant to information concerning evacuees. The latter provided accommodation for the homeless.

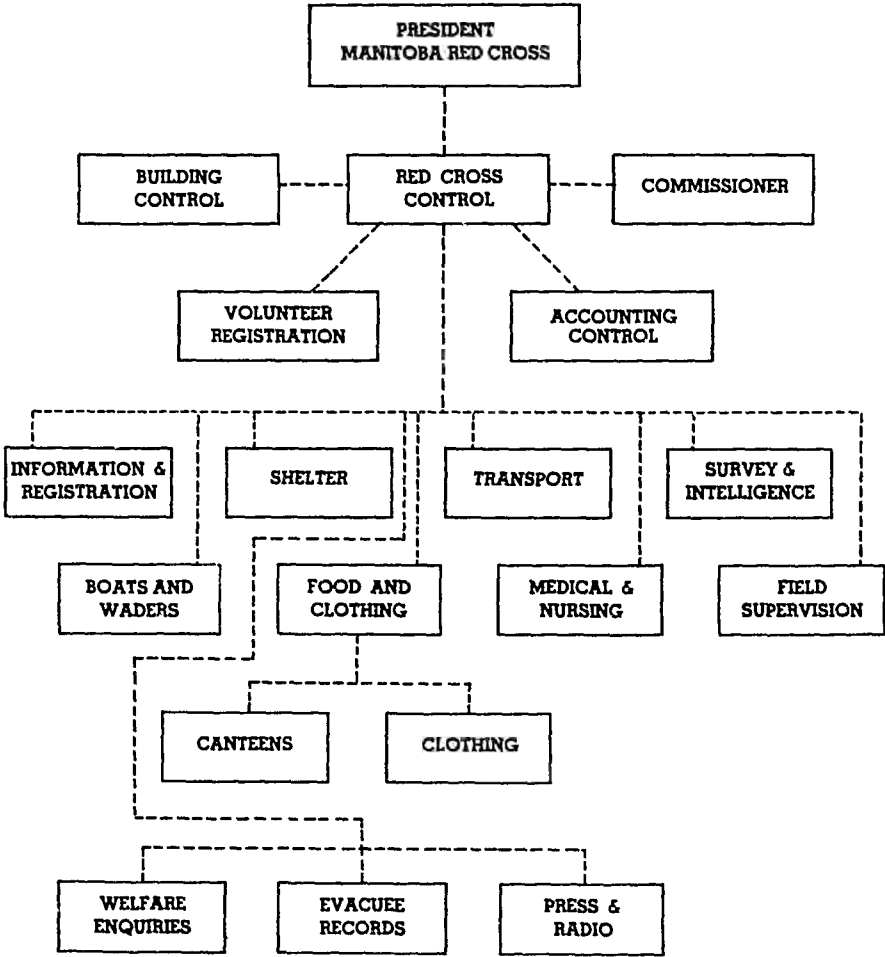
These two sections were required to keep highly accurate records of evacuee movement and placement, and evidence of the efficiency with which this was carried out is evident in the fact that every request for information regarding evacuees was satisfactorily dealt with. The total number of requests for information and replies made totalled 20,046. The total number of evacuees for which Red Cross assumed responsibility was 20,078. The records prepared by this department proved of inestimable value to officials who provided emergency assistance to victims in the post-flood period.

Other services in the basement administrative centre included Transportation and Communications, with a central registry of cars and trucks available, and drivers to man them round-the-clock; Food and Clothing, including a supply warehouse for canteens and food requisitions; Medical and Nursing, a central registry of doctors and nurses, which also received enquiries and requests for assistance in case of illness or accident. There were also Volunteer Registration, where help was registered and assigned; Intelligence and Survey, the statistical wing keeping an accurate record of road and weather conditions; Boats and Waders, providing these items for flood fighters and evacuation purposes; a four-machine teletype installation; a dual-switchboard telephone set-up and a Press and Radio section, which performed all of the functions of public relations.

During the operation of auditorium headquarters, May 9 to June 8, material aid was provided to between 18,000 and 20,000 evacuees, informa-

tion leading to the location of more than 11,000 others was provided, an average of 450 trips per day was made by the transportation section. Over 4,000 volunteers manned the headquarters on a 24-hour schedule, and before the emergency operation was closed down, more than \$500,000.00 had been spent and hundreds of tons of relief materials, clothing, food and other essentials donated by the public had been distributed to the more than 30,000 persons helped in the flood and post-flood period by Red Cross.

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF
RED CROSS FLOOD HEADQUARTERS



REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

FLOOD RELIEF HEADQUARTERS

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AREAS FLOODED
IN WINNIPEG
AND ADJACENT
MUNICIPALITIES
APRIL TO JUNE, 1950

WINNIPEG

ST BONIFACE

ST. VITAL

FORT GARRY





1. _____ COMMITTEE ON

EVACUEE REGISTRATION

BY THE 8th of May, the flood situation reached such proportions that large numbers of people had been forced from their homes and were seeking the assistance of Red Cross. Divisional Headquarters at 226 Osborne St. were soon crowded far beyond capacity as evacuees from such flooded areas as Emerson, Morris, St. Adolphe, Letellier, and St. Agathe moved into the city seeking shelter.

An attempt was made under very trying conditions to register these evacuees, establishing their pre-disaster address, temporary address, members of family, and other information that would aid in the keeping of a proper records system. Where necessary, these victims were given temporary housing through the Winnipeg Emergency Housing and Shelter agency.

By noon, May 9, the move was made to Winnipeg's Civic Auditorium, where the entire operation was substantially expanded to meet the rapidly growing need. Information and Registration section occupied the front portion of the main floor of the building.

During the two days, May 8 and 9, some 3,000 persons had been registered by Red Cross. Hundreds more had been supplied with the information they were seeking. By May 13, the flood situation in Winnipeg itself was critical, and a flood of evacuees descended on emergency headquarters seeking such assistance as they could get.

By this time, 47 volunteer workers under the supervision of Miss Arleigh Rumford, full-time Red Cross worker, were doing their utmost to meet the demands of the situation. Up to this time, registration had been made on a single white disaster information card, but section heads modified the registration procedure to include a three-card system. This system was found to be much more accurate.

Under the new system, the white card was used to register persons to be evacuated to points outside Winnipeg, and contained pre-disaster address and other information which might prove useful to the Welfare Enquiries section.

These forms were retained by evacuees until they were loaded on transportation means. They were then collected and returned to Red Cross headquarters by registrars. This form also showed the destination address of evacuees.

A yellow card was used to register evacuees who required temporary accommodation in Winnipeg, and who would leave the city either by personal arrangement or by arrangement through Red Cross. In the event that the evacuee was shifted to a point outside Winnipeg, re-registration on a white card became necessary.

A blue card was used for evacuees forced to leave their homes but who insisted on remaining in the city. These were referred to the civic emergency housing and shelter agency. This agency had undertaken to find accommodation for such persons by arrangement with Red Cross.

Temporary overnight accommodation in the civic auditorium was provided for dike workers, volunteer Red Cross workers, or evacuees requiring such accommodation before moving to a post-disaster destination. Men were accommodated on 250 cots on the main floor, while further accommodation for 150 was provided on the building's third floor. A fully equipped nursery also operated.

This section occupied the full services of 52 volunteers who worked on a round-the-clock basis, with three shifts of eight hours each. The number of persons passing through this section throughout the period May 8 to May 28 was 20,078.

2. _____ COMMITTEE ON

WELFARE ENQUIRIES

AS THE FLOOD approached crisis stage, Welfare Enquiries section, which had been operating from Manitoba Divisional headquarters at 226 Osborne Street, shifted to the Civic Auditorium where flood relief headquarters was established. This section was concerned with the tracing and recording of enquiries as to the whereabouts of evacuated flood victims.

Col. F. W. G. Miles, Saskatchewan Divisional Red Cross Commissioner, arrived in Winnipeg to assume direction of this important aspect of disaster services. During the entire period of the flood and for some time thereafter the keeping of accurate records dealing with movement of flood-displaced persons was one of the major services performed by Red Cross.

During the day of May 8, and up until noon of May 9, Col. Miles handled this entire service from the Manitoba Commissioner's office in the Red Cross building. Operating with a single telephone, in use almost constantly, he received 100 telegraphic queries on May 8, and by noon of May 9, this number had been swelled to 300.

With the movement of disaster relief services to Civic Auditorium, a full scale service sprang into operation. Four phones, sharing ten circuits with 40 other phones, were installed. This section was then operated by a staff of two. Later in the day, a teletype machine was installed, and Canadian Pacific loaned the services of Mr. Alex Baumann as traffic manager. Each succeeding day the number of enquiries increased. By noon of May 11, three shifts of eight hours each had been organized.

By May 16, the facilities of the section were expanded to include a direct teletype line to Red Cross national headquarters in Toronto, a direct line installed by Red Cross to Chicago channelled messages through that American city, and Canadian National and Canadian Pacific telegraphs had installed duplex machines. New telephone service to carry the increased burden was also installed.

The outline of procedure by which enquiries were handled followed this pattern.

- When a message was received by Red Cross it was entered in an **Alphabetical Index Book at Welfare Enquiries Control** under the name of the person enquiring.
- The message was attached to a numbered **Welfare Enquiries Form** and to a story sheet, and the number of the enquiry form noted in the index Control.
- The message was then channelled to the **Evacuee Records** section, where the pre-disaster and post-disaster address of the evacuee was ascertained. This information was recorded on the **Enquiries Form** by the records section and the entire file returned to Control.
- The file was then turned over to the supervisor of a **Tracing Team**. If an address had been noted on the form by Records, the evacuee would be telephoned and advised of the message. Any reply was then noted and passed back to the person enquiring. Details of each step of this procedure was recorded on the **Story Sheet**. The file was then returned to Control, and if the message to the person enquiring was to be teletyped, it was recorded by a typist and sent.
- If the evacuee being sought was not registered, city directories, telephone books, relatives, etc. were checked in an attempt to trace the person, each avenue tried being recorded at the time on the **Story Sheet**. Upon finding of the evacuee, procedure noted in the previous step would be completed.
- The original message and any subsequent messages, together with **Story Sheet**, upon completion of the above procedure, was then stapled together and filed in **Evacuee Records** section. This completed tracing procedure.



A total of 10,042 enquiries were handled successfully by the section during the period May 8 to May 29, occasioning 10,042 responses.

The operations of this section were handled by a staff of 68 volunteers. The services of day and night Canadian National and Canadian Pacific operators for teletype, and of members of American National Red Cross telecommunications division were in addition to these volunteers. Of particular value during the crisis were the services of Mr. Alex Baumann, Canadian Pacific Telegraph superintendent, who did much to ease the many communications problems that posed themselves.

The efficiency with which this section operated is exemplified by the fact that when its operations ceased, all enquiries received from persons requesting information had been satisfactorily dealt with.



SHELTER AND EVACUATION

THIS SECTION received evacuees at Greater Winnipeg railways stations or at Red Cross headquarters at civic auditorium. It assumed responsibility for transportation, care and maintenance of evacuees until they were delivered to Red Cross reception committees established at out-of-town points. Those evacuees not wishing to leave the greater Winnipeg area, who normally lived within that area were turned over to civic emergency housing authorities.

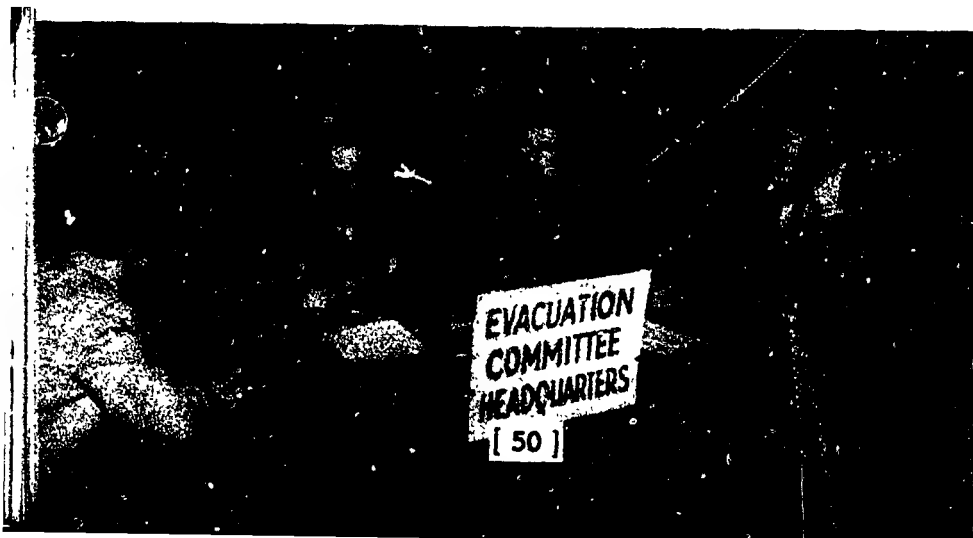
In the early stages of the emergency, temporary accommodation for evacuees was provided by Red Cross in military barracks and hotels. It soon became evident that such a system would prove inadequate, and it was decided that a main central receiving area should be established.

In addition, arrangements were made for in-transit shelters where available accommodation would be under Red Cross Control.

In the initial stages evacuees dealt with where those moved from their homes in outlying areas by Army or R.C.M.P. under extremely emergent conditions. These required considerable assistance upon arrival, and were generally moved to out-of-town reception points.

Out-of-town accommodation offered direct or through other flood agencies totalled some 37,000 in the province of Manitoba, while accommodation offered from points outside but adjacent to the province exceeded 16,000. Other offers were received from more distant points, but in the area readily accessible from Winnipeg, Red Cross had available space for many times the number actually placed.

The number of people (non-medical) evacuated by Red Cross, amounting to some 4,000 for which complete responsibility was assumed, therefore proved considerably less than the organization could have handled. For this reason, but a small fraction of accommodation offered was used and an explanatory letter was sent to all Manitoba points. Red Cross headquarters took similar action to advise other Red Cross divisions of this situation.



Railway and bus transportation agencies assigned railway and bus representatives to the Movement Control desk of this section. This high degree of co-operation made for a ready appreciation of problems as they arose and resulted in smoothing out arrangements for transportation required.

The organization of this section involved a Committee Headquarters, which assumed responsibility for organizational procedure and liaison with all other Red Cross Sections and to act in a general supervisory capacity to assure smooth operation; Evacuation Control, the officer in charge of which determined how, where and when movements of evacuees would take place and co-ordinated efforts of the three sub-committees under his control; Movement Control, responsible for all out-of-town transport by rail or bus, maintained Red Cross posts at each railway depot, and utilized services or railway and bus company representatives who assisted in expediting the work of this sub-committee; Care and Maintenance, which assumed responsibility for feeding, clothing and supplying other essentials to evacuees, acting in a liaison capacity and requisitioning for supplies from other Red Cross headquarters sections.

Placement Control, the final sub-committee in this section, received evacuees, provided temporary in-transit accommodation and arranged placement in out of town points.

Liaison with out-of-town points was briefly as follows:

- **Mayors of all Manitoba towns with a population of more than 500 were contacted by telegram and requested to advise of accommodation available.**
- **Local officials were informed of contemplated movement of evacuees to their communities and asked to confirm accommodation available.**
- **Local officials were advised upon movement of number of evacuees in transit to their community, transportation agency used, and approximate time of arrival.**

Shelter and Evacuation assumed responsibility for all refugees arriving from valley points by rail in large groups, out-of-town residents arriving at civic auditorium who had provided their own transportation or been shifted by Flood Control authorities, Greater Winnipeg residents assembled in groups in the greater city area, and Greater Winnipeg residents arriving at the Auditorium by independent means. Temporary accommodation for 500 persons was available at Civic Auditorium at all times, while temporary shelter for 500 persons awaiting transfer to outside points was available upon two hours notice.

In addition to the 4,000 evacuees for whom this department assumed complete responsibility in providing shelter upon evacuation, another 14,000 evacuated independently and reported to Red Cross. Joint-Chairmanship of this committee was provided by Messrs. W. S. M. Lang, and J. Ross Murray, both of Winnipeg, who acted in a volunteer capacity throughout the disaster period. They were assisted by a staff of 81 volunteers, who manned the section on a three-shift, 24-hour-day basis.

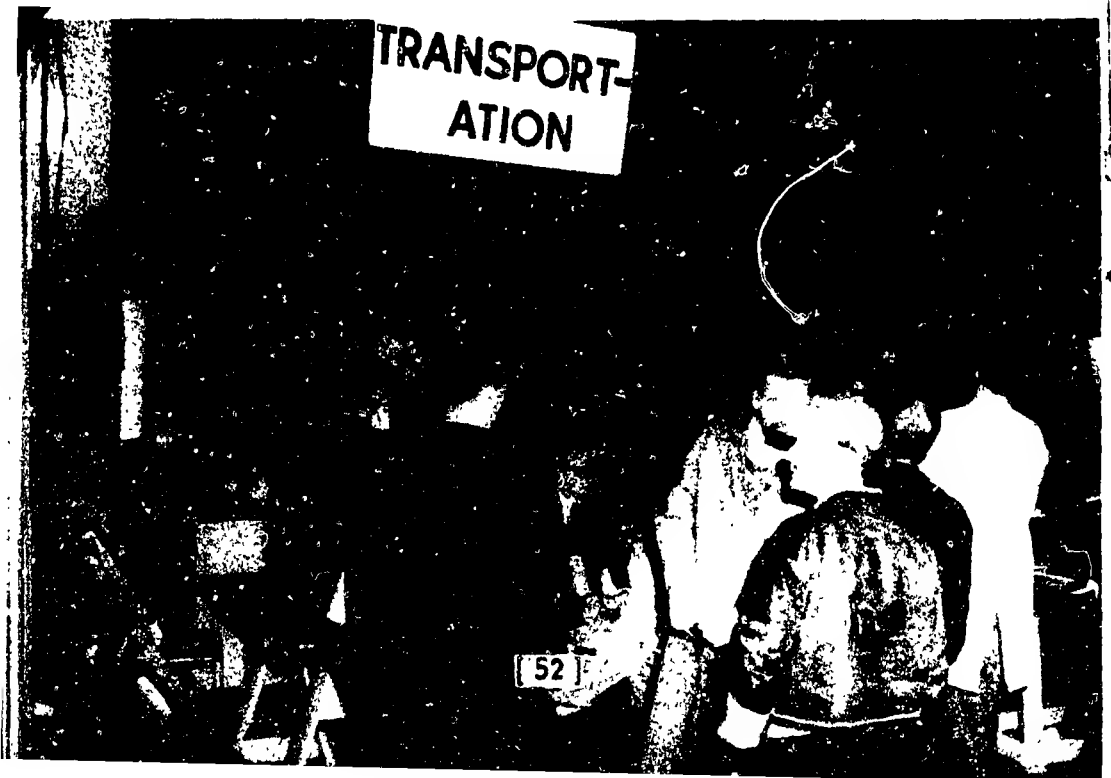
TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

WHEN it appeared obvious that flood conditions would approach disaster levels, steps were taken to expand the operations of the Transport and Communications section of Red Cross disaster services. Under the chairmanship of Mr. F. W. Thornhill, prominent Winnipeg business man, this section handled the exacting problem of providing mobility to the flood emergency effort.

Operating under very inadequate conditions at the outset of the emergency, this department grew rapidly as need developed. Operating on a 24-hour basis, with three eight-hour shifts on duty around the clock, continuous service was provided to Red Cross headquarters.

Communications service, when it became necessary to move from Red Cross Osborne Street headquarters, had to be greatly enlarged. Manitoba Telephone Service provided a switchboard and 10 additional trunk lines to the civic auditorium headquarters. This was later enlarged to include a second switchboard and 10 further trunk lines.

This department was also responsible for the operation of telegraphic service. At the height of the flood, four teletype machines, a field telephone, and direct installations were in service and operated by telegraph company, Red Cross and military personnel.



The co-operation extended by outside communications companies assured efficient operation of the communications set-up, and a staff of qualified technical help was maintained on a 24-hour basis.

Transport requirements within the Red Cross were also provided by this section. This service supplied emergency service to outside citizens and agencies as part of its activity. The range of service included picking up food supplies, transporting canteen workers and volunteers, assisting evacuation of threatened areas, moving blankets, bedding, beds, clothing shipments and other materials connected with Red Cross activities, and providing mobile canteen service on the dikes.

The section kept on hand a stand-by pool of cars and trucks and maintained ambulances on 24-hour call. Ambulance service was required in evacuation of hospital patients and invalids.

Contact with flooded areas was also maintained, and a map was kept in the section providing up-to-the-minute data on conditions of roads, bridges, alternate routes, and other essential information. By these means efficient point-to-point service was possible with a minimum of unforeseen delays and unnecessary hazard.

Transport and Communications successfully met transport and communications problems that developed in the course of the crisis. At the peak of the emergency, trucks, cars and drivers in service handled more than 900 trips in a single 24-hour period, and the average trip for the duration of the crisis was 450 assignments. A transport sub-depot was maintained at the C.N.R. depot, staffed and operated by Red Cross volunteer personnel.

System followed was to place each shift in charge of a shift chairman, who worked with a team of despatchers and pool of drivers. As trips were requisitioned, drivers were put on trip by a rotating schedule by which drivers were sent out as their names came to the top of the call-list. Type and nature of transportation required was noted and special requests filled in this manner.



FOOD AND CLOTHING

ESTABLISHMENT of Red Cross Flood Relief headquarters in Civic Auditorium, to meet the critical situation created by progress of the flood, led to establishment of a Food and Clothing section in the new centre. This section assumed responsibility for the distribution of food and clothing, canteen supply and canteen supervision.

The Food Distribution committee grew out of the great need for an efficient organization to handle the great quantities of food created by the flood. Very early in the flood, Red Cross was called upon to feed dike-workers and evacuees in many areas of the city and arrangements were made to carry out this task. As the crisis grew, the demand for both food and clothing, and the tremendous amounts of both that had to be handled made it obvious that the functioning of a food section would have to be made separate to that of the clothing section.

Up to May 6, requests for food, clothing, and all such supplies were handled directly by the Disaster Services Committee. However, on this date it was obvious that greatly expanded relief services had become a necessity.

The food and clothing department was placed under the direction of Mr. Knox Foster and within a short time was head of an organization made up of more than 150 volunteers and Red Cross staff members.

Radio appeals had been made to the public for foodstuffs, and large quantities of sandwiches, coffee, pastry and other edibles were flooding Red Cross headquarters. First "warehouse" of this department was the lobby of the Red Cross building on Osborne Street. By the morning of May 8 it was evident that a food distribution department would have to be set up to handle and distribute foodstuffs, and W. J. Percival was appointed head of this section.

Organization of the section to handle food properly immediately was begun, and when on May 9 flood emergency relief headquarters was moved to Winnipeg Auditorium, the department was able to use 3,000 square feet of space in the new quarters.

Many jobs confronted this section. Among these were the purchasing of basic food supplies (which was handled through the Purchasing Department), the policing of canteens to prevent over-ordering and subsequent wastage, the surveying of food needs in canteens, and the distribution of food to evacuee feeding centres.

As even more critical situations developed, a greater flow of food and clothing flooded into Red Cross. Donations of both essentials were received from many distant points in Canada and U.S. Great Britain, responding generously to reports of the plight of Manitobans, later flew and shipped a great quantity of clothing to ease the suffering of flood victims.

Separation of the food and clothing sections became necessary, and in a re-organizing move on May 15, it was decided to split the functions of these two sections, which up until that time had operated under a single

chairman. Clothing was placed in charge of Mr. N. C. Smith, while the food department was placed under the direction of Mr. W. J. McCann.

Key personnel from a large grocery company, under the direction of Mr. W. J. McCann, were called in to supervise operation of the section on a 24-hour basis. Red Cross personnel, until then working under supervision of Army Flood Control, were withdrawn and reported to this section in Red Cross headquarters.

The clothing section, operated by women from the I.O.D.E., was also supervised by the section, and movement of clothing supplies, pooling and inventory of these emergency materials was undertaken.

It was found that having the services of specialists in charge at all times was an important aspect of the successful functioning of the department, although problems had to be met continuously. One of the main problems was that posed by lack of proper refrigeration facilities. As supplies of meat, butter and other perishables were maintained, it was necessary to secure a commercial-type refrigerator without delay, and a local hardware company loaned a large refrigerator to Red Cross to solve this problem.

A second problem was created by inexperienced canteen operators over-ordering supplies and not taking proper care of foodstuffs. This problem was eased by visits of trained personnel, who gave instructions in ordering, rotation and care of food, and also authorized return of excess stocks to the Red Cross Food Centre.

It was found that with the services of trained key personnel available, operation of the section was rendered easy, and many difficulties that may have arisen had these persons not been available were avoided or circumvented.

By May 29, the flood crisis had passed into its second stage, that of rehabilitation and reconstruction. W. J. Percival, who up until that date had worked under Messrs. Foster and McCann, was asked to assume charge of the food distribution department. Movement of the Red Cross flood headquarters from the Winnipeg Auditorium was being planned, and it was necessary to move the stock of food to new quarters.

Storage facilities were provided by the Grain Exchange Curling Rink, and the transfer of approximately 25 tons of foodstuffs was accomplished by June 4.

During this second stage of the flood crisis this department gradually swung over from the original task of supplying foodstuffs to canteens to the shipping of food to rehabilitating areas.

When carloads of food began arriving from Ontario, the department was faced with the task of checking through some five thousand cases to cull spoiled food. This represented one of the major unforeseen tasks which confronted the reorganized department.

One of the responsibilities assumed by Red Cross was to supply food for evacuees for one week following their return to homes. In Morris, under the local direction of Mr. Andrew Swain and Mr. John Campbell, a canteen was set up in the courthouse to feed the growing numbers of people returning.

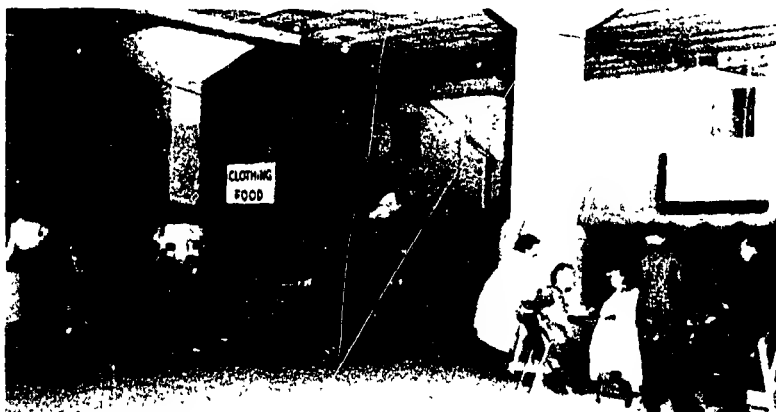
Dining cars provided by Red Cross, had filled the needs of flood workers, police, and the few citizens who had returned to the town early or stayed throughout the watery siege.

Later, food supplies were given to local citizens who returned to their homes, and in Morris, the food department supplied enough food to maintain the pre-flood population for a period of three weeks. Other communities to receive food were Emerson, Rosenort, Rosenhoff, St. Jean Baptiste, St. Adolphe, Dominion City, Aubigny and St. Agathe. Total sent amounted to 5,165 cases which was valued at an estimated \$25,753.00. The final shipment to a flood damaged community left the Curling Rink warehouse on July 16, almost three months after first flood emergency meetings were held.

The final task of the department was distribution of more than 2,000 cases of assorted groceries to 24 charitable or welfare organizations.

By the time the warehouse was closed, this section handled approximately 700,000 pounds of food, with an estimated retail value of almost \$102,000.00. This does not include an additional \$58,000.00 spent through country representatives for evacuee feeding nor food sent directly to hospital trains, canteens, and other feeding centres.

A conservative estimate of value of Red Cross assistance provided through this department has been placed by officials of this section at \$200,000.00, including donated foodstuffs, over the period from April 24 to August 12.



MEDICAL EVACUATION, RECEPTION AND RETURN

A.—MEDICAL EVACUATION

ONE of the results of flooding of the Red River in the Winnipeg area was the necessity to plan the mass evacuation of hospitals within the threatened area. First indication that such evacuation would be necessary was weakening of the dike protecting the civic group of hospitals, which, early on May 6, began to spill water into hospital grounds.

A few hours earlier the government asked Army to take charge of the co-ordination of flood control and the first task given the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps was to assist in clearing patients from these hospitals.

The Superintendent of Civic Hospitals had been able to discharge many walking tuberculosis cases and arranged transport of these in private cars. Thirty-four stretcher cases were cleared to empty bed space in Deer Lodge Military hospital. By the time the last three cases were to be moved the road in front of the hospital had been turned into a three-foot deep lake. The rise of water was so rapid that two iron lung cases and a group of Eskimo poliomyelitis sufferers were left behind and eventually cleared from the hospital, hours later, by amphibious vehicles operated by the Royal Canadian Navy.

Speedy rises in the river levels and new flooding of areas within the hospital areas necessitated rapid moves to clear threatened facilities and nursing homes, patients in St. Boniface hospital, were transferred to other quarters. By this time only two bridges were open across the Red river to Winnipeg, and officials could not guarantee the safety of buildings behind a 15-foot wall of water.

On May 6, the City Health Officer called a meeting of City, Provincial and Army Health Officers at which it was realized that steps would have to be taken to protect large numbers of dike workers from the danger of infection by establishment of inoculation clinics. The members who attended this meeting later became the nucleus of the Committee on Public Health and Sanitation, which continued to function until post-flood rehabilitation was well advanced.

On May 8, representatives from the medical branches of the province and city met with hospital superintendents, under the aegis of the Manitoba Hospital Association to determine the degree of dislocation of hospital accommodation in the city. It was decided that from that date all admissions to hospital would be limited to strict emergencies, daily bed states would be telephoned twice daily to medical headquarters to provide a check on hospital occupancy, and agreements were reached on employment of staffs for hospitals that had been closed.

This committee, the Hospital Committee, met daily thereafter until the flood passed its peak.

On May 8 too, Red Cross drew up a master plan to meet the challenge of any further degree of evacuation, and Dr. G. S. Fahrni was placed in charge of the Medical and Nursing Committee. In consultation with Lt.-Col. Morgan Smith, Command Medical Officer, it was decided to convene a meeting of organized medical and nursing representatives in the province. From this meeting a committee of eight was appointed to organize this effort.

This committee met the following morning, appointing Dr. Fahrni chairman, assumed over all planning and direction of medical and nursing requirements, and the original committees on hospitals, sanitation and public health, became in effect sub-committees of this body, chairmen sitting on the master committee.

One of the first tasks of the personnel committee was establishment of lists of volunteer professional workers. Response was immediate and more than 200 doctors were on the lists for volunteer emergency service. Adequate numbers of nurses, nurses' aids, and orderlies were maintained, as was a medical supply section. Medical aid stations, staffed by qualified medical personnel were set up at the two city railway stations, and infant feeding centres were established for evacuees.

By May 14, as the flood reached higher levels, the Army made plans for total disaster, and a slight re-organization of the medical group became necessary. This new organization was set up on the following plan:

DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES

Command Medical Officer

Civilian Physician

Army Medical Officer

Press Representative

Committees

Each with a civilian and army co-chairman

Medical Care and Personnel Hospitals

Medical Evacuation Public Health & Sanitation

Supplies

In effect an army representative was added to each sub committee, these officers for the most part being civilian practitioners in the city called up for duty in the reserve force by mobilization in the face of the emergency.

Rising flood waters and resulting flooding of basements of almost all city hospitals, resulted in the decision that one hospital could be maintained. Winnipeg General hospital was thus selected as the logical institution, being located on high ground. Deer Lodge Hospital, at the city's western outskirts, was also maintained.

The problem of bed space outside of Winnipeg was tackled by the Provincial government. Large numbers of patients were sent to Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Lakehead. In this, local health officials received assistance from the two senior medical members of the Health Departments of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Hospital and nursing home occupancy in Greater Winnipeg on May 1 was 4121. This figure was reduced to 1163 by May 20. This was accomplished through rigid control of admissions, discharge of many to their homes, and evacuation of 1424 patients to outside hospitals.

Evacuation was carried out by rail, air and ambulance car, and worked smoothly in spite of early difficulties. Railways particularly gave admirable assistance, and co-ordination was made possible by establishment by Red Cross of a railway desk staffed by senior representatives of the CPR and CNR.

B.—MEDICAL RECEPTION AND RETURN

WITH THE return of the river to near-normal conditions, the return of medical evacuees to the city of Winnipeg area was undertaken. On the evening of May 25, the existing medical apparatus was re-organized, with Dr. C. B. Schoemperlen as chairman, assisted by a committee of military personnel, a Red Cross representative and a civilian person in charge of medical supplies.

A warning letter was sent out to all hospitals in Manitoba and neighboring provinces who had accepted patients advising them that these evacuees would be returned to the City within a short time. Movement of medical evacuees began immediately, the first being initiated on May 28.

The following code system for medical movement was used:

M—Ambulance

N—C.N.R. Standard Equipment

P—C.P.R. Standard Equipment

B—C.P.R. Hospital Baggage Car

A—Air

The baggage car proved to be an excellent means of movement. It was easy to load, patients were very comfortable, and nursing was easier. The standard baggage car was outfitted with hospital beds at one end and double decker beds at the other, providing accommodation for a total of 30 patients, or, with only hospital beds providing accommodation for 19 patients.

In order to avoid pooling large numbers of patients in Winnipeg with no accommodation provided for them, nominal rolls were prepared and teletyped to the Department of Health in Saskatchewan so that patients could be prepared. Conducting parties of a doctor, nursing aide and orderlies were sent from Winnipeg, taking medical supplies. Trains were met in Winnipeg by Lt.-Col. P. K. Tisdale, of the Army Medical Corps, or by Dr. Schoemperlen. Patients were then directed to their original hospital or institution.

Notification of all moves was sent to Dr. C. R. Donovan, Provincial deputy minister of health, and upon movement of city patients, Dr. R. G. Cadham, City of Winnipeg deputy medical health officer, was notified. Red Cross was kept informed of all moves on notification cards, and next-of-kin were notified on the return of patients on Red Cross notification cards sent from the Medical Reception and Return committee office.

Within the first few days 141 patients were transferred back to Winnipeg. The entire operation was carried out in two movement plans, Ursa Major (Big Bear), initiated May 28 and completed by June 3, involving patients outside the province; and Ursa Minor (Little Bear), carried on June 4 to June 7, involving return of patients from rural points in the province. Overlapping of the two plans included small movements of patients from within Manitoba under the Ursa Major plan and some smaller moves were made after June 7, but involved largely single or small numbers of patients who were too ill to be moved on schedule. These patients were moved by Red Cross, under direction of Dr. Catherine MacDonald, of Red Cross; or, in the case of tubercular cases, by the Sanatorium Board of Manitoba.

An approximate total of 1251 patients were moved, of which about one-half were stretcher cases. This department was aided by Miss Ina Broadfoot, of Red Cross, who assumed responsibility for providing voluntary nurse's aides and orderlies.



SURVEY AND INTELLIGENCE

WHEN Red Cross Flood Relief Headquarters moved to Civic Auditorium from Divisional Headquarters on Osborne Street, a department was organized to keep the centre advised on progress of the flood throughout the valley area, weather conditions, and to act as the intelligence wing of Red Cross Control. This section became known as the Survey and Intelligence section.

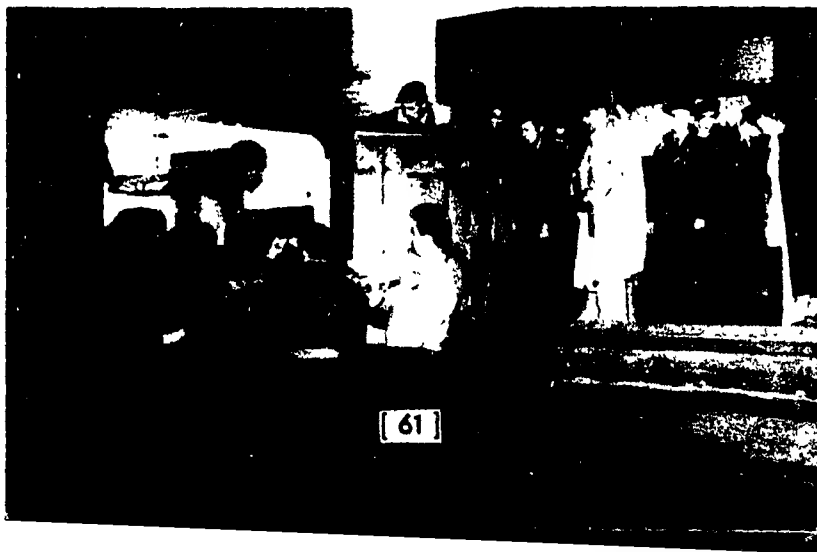
An additional phase of this section's activities included the field supervision of the flood emergency effort, which was carried on as a separate function to the intelligence work of the section.

The department was organized at the request of Mr. Brian Dickson, Manitoba Divisional Red Cross President, and immediate work consisted of setting up maps of the flooded area, both in southern Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg. Up to date information regarding progress of the flood was charted on on overlay maps with chinagraph pencil.

The daily duties of Survey and Intelligence consisted of providing the centre with an hourly report on the river level at Winnipeg, which information was obtained direct from Flood Control; a report of rural water levels, which was provided once daily; a report on highway conditions, obtained through the provincial department of highways; and a report on condition of bridges and underpasses.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police officials were contacted daily for latest information on conditions in rural areas, and in this respect Inspector Brady, and Superintendent Wilson co-operated very closely with this section.

During the most serious period of the flood, Survey and Intelligence officers made several daily trips to check particularly on bridges and underpasses so that Red Cross drivers would be informed at all times which routes were available to them. The value of this section was its ability to supply up to date and accurate information to all sections of Red Cross, and its operations were similar to those of an Army Intelligence wing.



FIELD SUPERVISION AND EVACUEES

THE responsibility of this section commenced when evacuees from the flooded Red River valley reached the point of refuge. On May 11, when the section was established as a sub-committee to Survey and Intelligence, the river had not yet reached its peak but the major threatened areas had been depopulated voluntarily or under the supervision of Red Cross Shelter and Evacuation section. The work of this section continued from that date until early in July, when all or a major portion of the evacuees had returned to their homes.

The section sent refugees from flooded areas to a total of 147 points of temporary shelter, a majority of which were within a 160-mile radius of Winnipeg. Some of the major communities which gave shelter to evacuees were: Brandon, Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Kenora, Beausejour, Killarney, and Winnipeg Beach. Many small towns more closely situated also housed large numbers of evacuees.

The plan of operation which finally developed divided the dispersal area into seven major areas. These seven areas were the responsibility of field supervisors, provided by the larger accounting firms in Winnipeg.

Areas established were:

1. **The area immediately west of the Red River and contiguous to the flooded area, extending to Elm Creek, Carman and Morden.**
2. **No. 3 Highway west of Morden as far as Boissevain.**
3. **No. 2 Highway west of Elm Creek as far as Glenboro.**
4. **The area centred on Dauphin and extending from McCreary on the east as far as Roblin on the west and as far North as Swan River.**
5. **No. 1 Highway between Winnipeg and Sidney.**
6. **The area centred on Brandon, Minnedosa and Neepawa.**
7. **The area east of Winnipeg, including Beausejour and Kenora, and the points east of but contiguous to the flooded area.**

A step, developed later due to the exigencies of the situation, was the screening process necessary to determine the need of the evacuee. For that purpose a simple screening form was developed, and put into use by field representatives in the seven areas.

Although there were no major problems regarding placement and feeding of evacuees, due largely to the efficiency developed in the face of the crisis by the Red Cross flood emergency apparatus, local problems did arise, and it was the task of this section to deal with them as they arose.

It was in the work of this group too that the excellent spirit of the people of many communities in the province played a big part to ease the strains of the evacuee problem. A number of these incidents are worthy of mention.

The Lions Club of Beausejour organized a cavalcade of cars to take the first group of evacuees from the Winnipeg Y.M.C.A. to Beausejour, a distance of 40 miles, where the Club placed evacuees in good shelter, supervised food assistance and carried on continuous supervision of the welfare of the evacuees.

Similarly, at Steinbach, a smaller town some 40 miles from the city, a local committee headed by the town mayor organized a cavalcade which met 500 evacuees at Winnipeg and assumed full responsibility for their care and welfare. It is estimated that an additional 500 evacuees found refuge at Steinbach, where care of evacuees was undertaken without one penny of cost to Red Cross.

Outside of the province, Kenora, attracted an estimate 2,000 evacuees. Here too the local committee carried on a thoroughly organized program of reception and cars. Each train was met and evacuees directed to the Legion Hall where medical inspection was provided and temporary shelter afforded pending dispersal.

At Dauphin, a similar job to that performed at Kenora was carried on by the local committee headed by the mayor. This locality was faced with a special problem as a majority of the evacuees reaching that point were French-speaking, while the community is preponderantly English-speaking.

Although it is difficult to catalogue the many individual cases of local organization, it can be said that at many points there was no call for help from Red Cross but the whole assistance plan developed as a purely voluntary and humanitarian effort on the part of local residents.

The basis of assistance offered by the Field Supervision committee was as follows:

(a) AS TO SHELTER . . .

That the Red Cross had no money for shelter but this would be provided—in private homes preferably, and if that was not obtainable, in public buildings furnished with bedding.

(b) AS TO FOOD . . .

That where the evacuees were destitute food would be supplied by Red Cross.

At the outset there was some confusion in that no uniform rate of assistance was established, however, final instructions set the rate of assistance at from 60 to 75 cents per person per day, which was found quite adequate.

(c) AS TO CLOTHING . . .

Red Cross had abundant clothing supplies available in Winnipeg and this stock was made available to all evacuees.

Chairman of this important section of Red Cross flood relief work was Mr. Walter J. MacDonald.

PRESS, RADIO, AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

THE flood crisis in Manitoba posed a challenging problem to Red Cross in creating the need for a public information section suitable to cope with the many demands created by the situation. From the earliest indications of disaster, the press of Canada clamored for news arising out of the flood, and anxious relatives, friends and acquaintances of persons in the Red River valley areas eagerly sought news from the area.

Through the early period of the flood, Miss Jean Hinds, publicity director for Manitoba Division, had carried the burden of keeping press and radio informed of Red Cross activities in the disaster. As the crisis became more grave it proved impossible for one person to carry on this work. When Red Cross moved to civic auditorium, a press and radio section was set up headed by Murray Turner, Winnipeg advertising executive, assisted by J. N. Kelly, one-time Red Cross publicity chief, of Toronto. Rod McInnis, of Montreal, assumed responsibility for the actual functioning of the section, carrying out the function of editor and expeditor.

A number of volunteers, experienced in handing news, gave volunteer service to the department, providing a staff operating on a 24-hour basis.

One of the most singular features of this department was a self-contained photo unit in emergency headquarters, headed by Dave Portigal, Winnipeg commercial photographer. This department, staffed by three cameramen, offered a file of record prints to visiting newsmen, and provided material for a daily newspaper photo-story service which reached twenty newspapers on a national basis. Coverage thus provided extended from Halifax to Victoria, including daily newspapers, Class "A" weeklies, press wire services, news syndicates, local radio stations and C.B.C. Assistance was given to the National Film Board, Associated Screen News, Acme News Service, Pathe Movie news, and various news photo and news services.

In addition to offering assistance in providing leads and material for visiting newspapermen, Red Cross staff prepared daily feature stories, pointing up the work of Red Cross in the disaster. The success of this department can be gauged by the fact that stories suggested by, drafted and written by, or photographs issued by the department appeared in almost every newspaper from coast to coast. At the height of the disaster, when more than one hundred newspapermen were in Winnipeg covering the flood, these services were instrumental in preventing too-lurid reporting of the situation and any resultant panic, and steering newsmen, strange to the area, to sources of news.

Following departure of newspapermen from Winnipeg, particularly wide publication was given to Red Cross photographic coverage in papers throughout the nation.

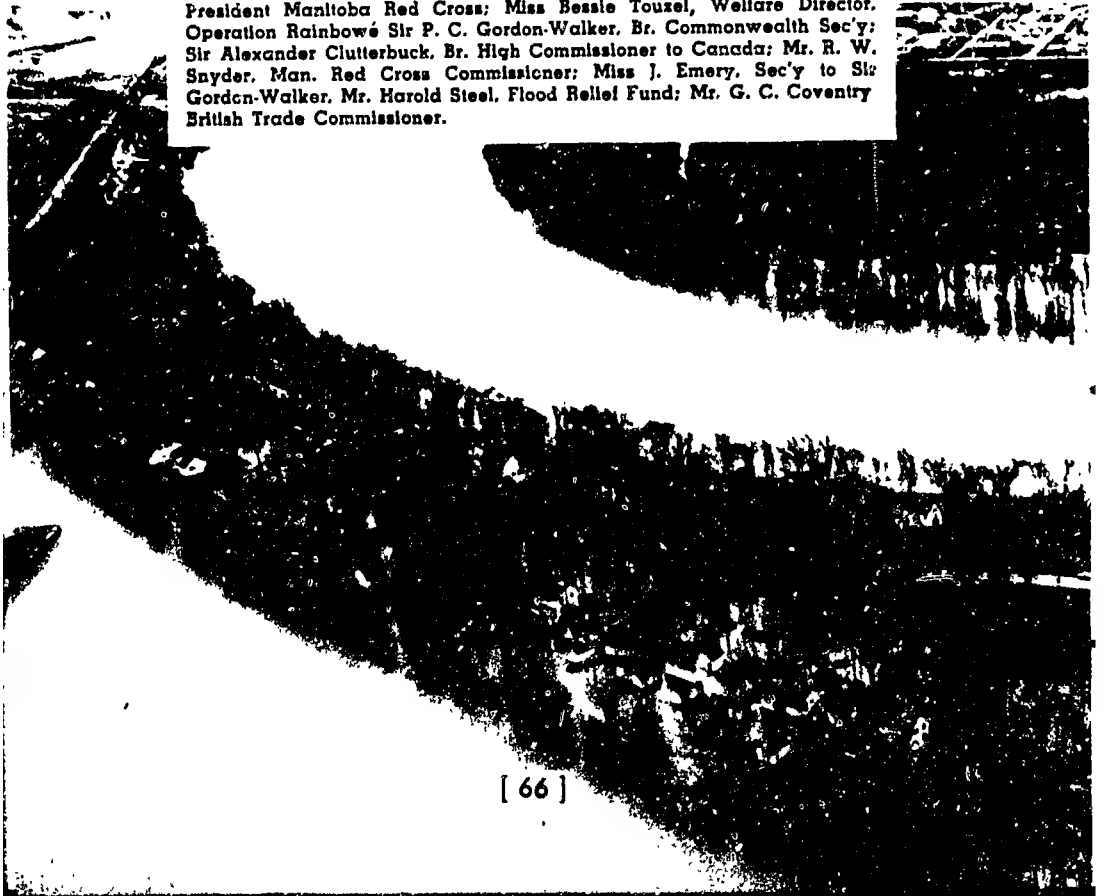
Among the outstanding Canadian Journalists who worked with Red Cross during the disaster were Kate Aitken, Jack Scott, Ross Munro, Gerald Clark, Alexandrine Gibb, and many others.

In addition to regular news service, this section acted as the informational wing of Red Cross, sending out reports and appeals from headquarters to radio stations throughout the city. Particularly close co-operation was recieved from both newspapers and radio stations in the city, and C.B.C. co-operated to the utmost in making national broadcasting facilities available to Red Cross during the disaster.





Photo taken during official tour of flooded areas (L. to R.) Messrs. Cecil Lamont, H. W. Manning, Flood Relief Fund; Mr. R. G. B. Dickson, President Manitoba Red Cross; Miss Bessie Touzel, Welfare Director, Operation Rainbow; Sir P. C. Gordon-Walker, Br. Commonwealth Sec'y; Sir Alexander Clutterbuck, Br. High Commissioner to Canada; Mr. R. W. Snyder, Man. Red Cross Commissioner; Miss J. Emery, Sec'y to Sir Gordon-Walker, Mr. Harold Steel, Flood Relief Fund; Mr. G. C. Coventry British Trade Commissioner.



"OPERATION

RAINBOW"



IN APRIL 14, the Canadian Red Cross Society, Manitoba Division, under the sponsorship of its disaster committee, convened a meeting of representatives of provincial and municipal governments, the armed forces and private social agencies and citizens organizations. At this meeting a co-ordinating committee was set up under the chairmanship of Mr. Frank Carpenter, disaster chairman. Mr. Carpenter had already directed the activities of his committee through the flood of 1948. This new committee undertook a similar task to that of 1948—the meeting of the variety of problems arising out of the flood.

During the fortnight that followed much of the area south of Winnipeg was evacuated and finally during the month that followed, the complete evacuation of Greater Winnipeg became a likelihood. On May 5, at provincial government request, Brigadier R. E. A. Morton, general officer commanding prairie command, as chief co-ordinator, set up a Flood Control Committee, including representatives of the armed services, the Premier of Manitoba and the departments of agriculture and health, engineers from the Department of mines and resources, the mayors and reeves of affected cities, towns and municipalities, the city and mounted police, Red Cross and the Volunteer Bureau.

With the formation of this group and the redistribution of responsibilities for different aspects of the flood fight, Red Cross undertook the responsibility for the feeding and clothing of evacuees, transportation for evacuation purposes, supervision of evacuee centres, conducting officers for trains, and for accommodation in cities and town outside of the danger area. Into this situation on May 7, Mr. Colin Herrle, national administration, American Red Cross disaster services, came to assist in the organization of Red Cross emergency services.

Adequate welfare services are essential in a flood situation, and the organization and planning of such service became an important aspect of

flood relief work early in the disaster. While in the earlier stages protection of life is primary, the early development of individualized services to people is important. Arrangements had to be made therefore for mass provision of food, clothing, and housing; and plans had to be laid for the return to their homes of individuals and families and adequate interim assistance until homes were re-established.

Through the Volunteer Bureau, or as individuals, social workers offered their help to Red Cross at an early date. Out of their own recognition of the needs of the crisis, and that of others, they assumed certain responsibilities. They interviewed applicants needing physical assistance, persons unusually disturbed by the situation, and others with complicating social problems. Individuals requiring such assistance were referred to these services by staff at the emergency centre registration desk.

On May 17, the direction of social service aspects of the flood situation was assumed by Miss Bessie Touzel, assistant executive director, Canadian Welfare Council, of Ottawa. Miss Touzel, who performed a monumental task in the flood and post-flood period, was directed to Winnipeg by the national office of Red Cross.

Immediate consultations were held with the Manitoba Divisional commissioner, Mr. Roy Snyder, and with Mr. Herrle, representatives of local social agencies, the provincial department of public welfare, under the aegis of the Council of Social Agencies in Winnipeg. A meeting of representatives of social agencies, the provincial department of public welfare and representatives of affected communities was called by Red Cross, May 19, in the Legislative Buildings.

Out of this meeting, a group was appointed to draft policy for the social services section of Red Cross. Miss Touzel acted as chairman of the planning group meeting held later on that day.

Among those present at this policy meeting were Mr. Ivan Schultz, provincial minister of health and welfare; Mr. K. O. Mackenzie, director of public welfare; Mr. Elswood Bole, Mayor of St. Vital; Mr. Jack Blumberg, chairman of the Winnipeg Welfare Committee; and representatives of Red Cross.

On May 22, the policy statement prepared by this group was presented to a reconvened meeting of the original group and policy governing Red Cross participation in social services arising out of the flood emergency situation was established and put into operation.

Red Cross responsibility was confined to two distinct areas:

1. provision of emergency material aid, and
2. referral of those with social or other problems to the appropriate agencies.

It was agreed that emergency aid would be interpreted to mean provision of food, fuel, clothing, medical care, mass shelter where necessary, minimum utensils required to enable establishment of interim housekeeping situations, and that such provision should be to all needy flood victims.

The organization of Red Cross social services provided for a director, Miss Touzel, and three assistants who worked with her from the Auditorium and later from new emergency headquarters established in the University of Manitoba buildings on Osborne Street north. Appointment of district officers in charge of areas of large and concentrated need was also provided

for, as was a supporting staff of interviewers to meet and interview evacuees with an eye to providing for needs.

The intention at the time of organization of Operation Rainbow, the phrase used to describe this phase, was to have social services conduct all interviews and make requisitions on Red Cross emergency aid supplies. Departments such as clothing, food, recovery, were considered supporting departments to the Social Service section. However, it proved difficult in some instances for departments to operate as supporting sections due to some failure to evolve clear lines of responsibility.

The establishment of many more social service offices than were finally required was envisaged in the early stages—part time service was established at Winnipeg Beach, an office opened at Point Douglas, and an office operated in the town of Morris, where large scale social assistance services were required. Two representatives supervised the administration of at first a canteen and general clothing depot and later an interviewing service to representatives of families. A full-time office was in operation in St. Jean de Baptiste for one week, and later on a part-time basis by a visiting social worker. Offices were also operated for short periods at St. Agathe, St. Adolphe, Letellier, and Aubigny. These part-time arrangements were made possible by staff members giving anything from a couple of half-days to two days of the week during the period of need. Intermittent calls by senior staff at Emerson, Rosenhoff, Rosenort, supplemented local effort. Earlier, through the field supervision section of Survey and Intelligence, correspondence and visits to Brandon, Dauphin, Lowe Farm, and other evacuation centres were carried out.

From the time that registration of persons receiving service within the social service department was formally established, service was given to something over 6,000 individuals or families, representing a total of more than 25,000 people.

In addition to emergency services envisioned in the statement of policy, Red Cross was able to give additional services. Gifts from Canada, Great Britain, and the United States were distributed. Among these were food, sheets, blankets, pillow cases, towels, draperies, flatware, dishes, toys and tools. These were supplemented by other essentials purchased by Red Cross to maintain its stores.



Hardest Hit Town in Manitoba was Morris. This farm was isolated and planes flew a unique "Operation Haylift" to supply fodder to cattle and horses stranded on dry patches of ground. Plane is seen dropping bale to horses huddled in trees (upper right).

THE FLOOD

AND THE SMALL COMMUNITIES

9

NOWHERE during the disastrous floods in Manitoba was the spirit of neighborliness and sympathetic concern more dramatically displayed than in the open-hearted manner in which communities throughout the prairies greeted evacuees moved from their homes. As the trek of evacuees from the flooded areas to dispersal zones created by Red Cross continued, thousands of unfortunate flood victims were granted sanctuary in small communities on the periphery of the flooded area.

In some cases arrangements for care of victims was arranged by Red Cross, but in many the act of invitation, accommodation and care was voluntarily offered by entire communities.

Among those receiving assistance were the aged, the infirm, the sick and the displaced, who were warmly welcomed in communities large and small. In each, citizens acting voluntarily on self-organized committees worked long hours and undertook great responsibilities with little complaint.

To many communities, the call for assistance came early. Lowe Farm, small community some 20 miles west of devastated Morris, was one of these. This area felt the full fury of flood and under the direction of Ed. Braun, a Lowe Farm resident, a magnificent effort was undertaken. Forty boats were used by the people of this community to rescue and assist flood victims in Morris, Rosenhoff, and farm areas adjacent.

Other municipalities, outside of the actual flood area, felt the effects of its consequences. In the town of Richer, under the chairmanship of H. O. Dupas, 210 people were given refuge. A unified effort, which included the town council, the Redemptorist Fathers, and ordinary citizens, provided food and shelter to these victims for the duration of the crisis.

Similarly in Morden, from word was first received that 20 aged and infirm patients were on their way to the city, cheerful, voluntary aid was

given. In spite of language difficulties, the emergency nature of all arrangements, and the resulting elements of confusion, assistance was provided to hospital patients for a little more than one month. The entire facilities of the Morden Freemason's hospital were made available to these hospital evacuees. Other arrangements for well evacuees were taken care of by a joint committee comprised of the local Chamber of Commerce and members of the town council, and 225 evacuees received accommodation and food.

This type of assistance was also given to evacuees in the town of Winkler, where for three weeks, hospital evacuees were billeted in Bethel Hospital.

A similar record of unstinting service was established by the town of Portage la Prairie, where under the leadership of Mr. H. G. Prior, a Red Cross committee to assist flood evacuees was organized. This community, some 65 miles west of threatened Winnipeg, took care of more than 2,000 flood evacuees, approximately 1,100 of whom were the direct responsibility of the Red Cross committee. A canteen was established in the Canadian Legion hall, and a unique aspect of the operation of Portage la Prairie flood relief committee was the equipping of the United Church Residential Indian School as a hospital in the event of evacuation of patients from Winnipeg. This building, although called upon to serve only about 30 patients, was fully re-equipped to handle 100. Members of the Portage la Prairie committee spoke very highly of the co-operation and unstinting efforts of Mr. Lachlan MacLean, director of the school.

In Brandon, the Red Cross Society branch undertook the care of approximately 1,000 evacuees who fled the city of Winnipeg. Ninety evacuees were placed in Brandon Technical school, while an additional 350 were billeted in the Agricultural school through arrangement with the Manitoba Agriculture Department.





"Feeding Centre at Portage Legion Hall"

In Brandon especially, close co-operation took place between the Red Cross organization, under the leadership of Mr. E. E. Harris, branch president, and Mrs. J. B. Waddell, branch secretary, and a committee of service clubs of the community, an important figure of which group was Mr. Milton Donaldson.

This city also took care of 18' stretcher cases in its General Hospital, while many wheelchair cases, and old and infirm persons, were taken care of in the Brandon Sanitorium.

Yet another type of effort was that put forward by an organized committee, under the leadership of Mayor P. Irwin and Mr. G. J. Sawyer, of the Winnipeg Beach Kiwanis Club. Approximately 5,000 evacuees fled to this summer resort community. There vacant cottages were thrown open to receive them. A very high degree of organization sped this emergency relief effort into action almost overnight, and close liaison between Red Cross representatives in Winnipeg flood relief headquarters and Winnipeg Beach authorities ironed out many difficult and aggravating problems which arose.

To tell the story of assistance, voluntary and requested, that was given to the many tens of thousands of persons who fled Winnipeg and the Red River valley of Manitoba during the flood crisis, would take many pages and thousands of words. A similar amount of space would be required to tell of the assistance offered by neighboring prairie provinces and Ontario. The examples offered represent a cross sectional view of a few of the many. The real story of assistance given by the more than 200 communities which offered help has its most permanent and lasting record etched in the hearts and history of the people who received this unselfish assistance during the flood crisis of 1950.



ON THE surface the assignment handed to Dorothy Pope, driver with the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service, seemed a routine one. In the hurly-burly of the critical situations created by the flood, a call to assist in the evacuation of another sick person did not appear difficult.

By May 6, the Red River was spreading across the valley, inundating farms and many calls for assistance were being received at Red Cross headquarters. On that night the dike protecting the Wildwood housing development in Fort Garry had collapsed, and many other critical situations had been reported.

Dorothy Pope's assignment was to drive to Lot 100, near St. Norbert, a town 14 miles outside of the city of Winnipeg, and remove a sick man from his flooded home. When she got within a mile and a half of the home, she found her progress barred by a lake, which covered the farmer's fields and lapped to the door of his home. The enterprising BTS driver was not stopped by this obstacle. To get the farmer from his home and into the city to safety, she rowed across his flooded fields in a leaky rowboat and waded back across those fields in waist-deep water at two o'clock in the morning. Returning to the highway, she hailed a truck which took her patient to hospital.

Miss Pope's successful completion of her assignment was one of the many acts of individual heroism which passed almost unnoticed in the midst of disaster. She was one of the many Red Cross workers, staff and volunteer, who rose to the demands of the flood situation.

THE FLOOD



AND THE BLOOD BANK

*by Dr. Cecil Harris, B.Sc., M.D., MRCP.
Provincial Medical Director
Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service.*

ABOUT the last week of April it became apparent that the state of the Red River would cause considerable trouble because of a combination of various climatic conditions. Flood waters during the next two weeks rapidly came northward causing complete evacuation of towns to the south of Winnipeg. The people of these towns came to Winnipeg and with them came hospital in-patients.

Overcrowding in the Winnipeg hospitals led to a decision that elective surgery should be curtailed. As a result, blood consumption dropped from approximately 270 bottles in the week of May 1 to May 8, to 200 bottles and 170 bottles in the succeeding two weeks. That the drop was not greater surprised many, but the continued demand for blood arose from the needs of true emergency cases and of cases of elective surgery still being dealt with at Winnipeg General Hospital.

Appointments had previously been made for clinics on Monday, May 8, and Wednesday, May 10. During this week, Red Cross was extremely busy in its attempt to deal with the many evacuees and attendant problems of the flood situation. The Red Cross Centre, which houses both the Division offices and the Blood Transfusion Service, was by this time thronged with tired and muddy flood workers and Red Cross volunteers.

It was suggested that the two clinics should be cancelled, but announcements were given by press and radio that they would go on and better than 50% of the required number of bottles were collected at each clinic, an example of good faith on the part of donors.

The decision had to be made whether or not to carry on further clinics in the face of the dislocation of ordinary city life caused by the flood. It was decided by the Provincial Donor Panel Committee, the Donor Panel Organizer, and the Provincial Medical Director that it would be best not to attempt to continue clinics. This opinion was also held by Dr. W. S. Stanbury, who had by this time arrived in Winnipeg.

Over Dr. Stanbury's signature went a telegram alerting Depots in Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton to increase their clinics to provide for probable requests for blood in Winnipeg.

From this period, blood was sent from these depots and, because consumption did not fall below 150 bottles, it was later decided to ease the burden carried by the three western depots and requests were sent to the Hamilton Depot in the latter part of this period. Bottles of blood received were:

EDMONTON	CALGARY	VANCOUVER	HAMILTON
May 16—36	May 18—40	May 20—48	June 1—55
May 20—78	May 20—10	May 31—39	June 6—87
May 26—75	May 25—50	June 5—48	142
June 3—83	May 30—46		
	June 2—34		
			TOTAL
272	180	135	729

Because the amount of blood available at the bank was thus maintained at an adequate level, no request by hospitals was not met in full. Certain difficulties developed. Due to overloading of telephone circuits, hospitals experienced delays amounting to hours endeavoring to get through to the blood bank. This was due to congestion of lines by calls relating to the flood. This difficulty was solved by making hourly calls to hospitals day and night. Thus rapid response could be given to any call for blood.

Certain hospitals experienced difficulty due to the flood. St. Boniface Hospital and Concordia Hospital could only be reached by driving through flooded roads and over bridges aswhirl with flood waters. However, transport drivers did not fail to make their objectives and this problem was later eased by evacuation of the most seriously affected hospitals.

Several of the Blood Transfusion Service staff were released to do other flood work. The Depot technicians continued their work, the nursing department carried on processing and sterilization of the equipment and the Plasma Laboratory carried out its usual, although somewhat lessened, work.

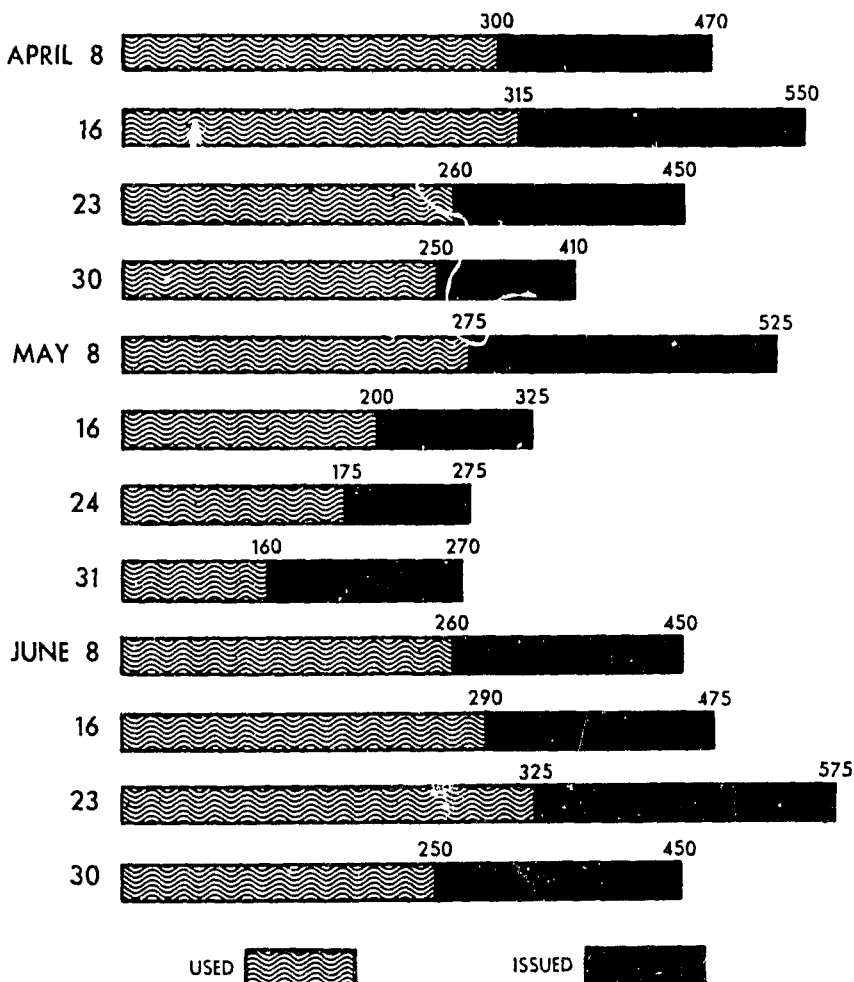
The fate of the building was still in question and plans were made to cover complete power loss and total flooding. The first stage would have been an extra power line. The second phase covered flooding of the Depot and in this event all city hospitals except Winnipeg General would also be out of commission. A small nucleus of the Blood Transfusion Service, with essential equipment, would then move to the Pathology department of the Winnipeg General Hospital. The remainder of the team would take all necessary equipment and move to the laboratory of the Brandon Memorial Hospital.

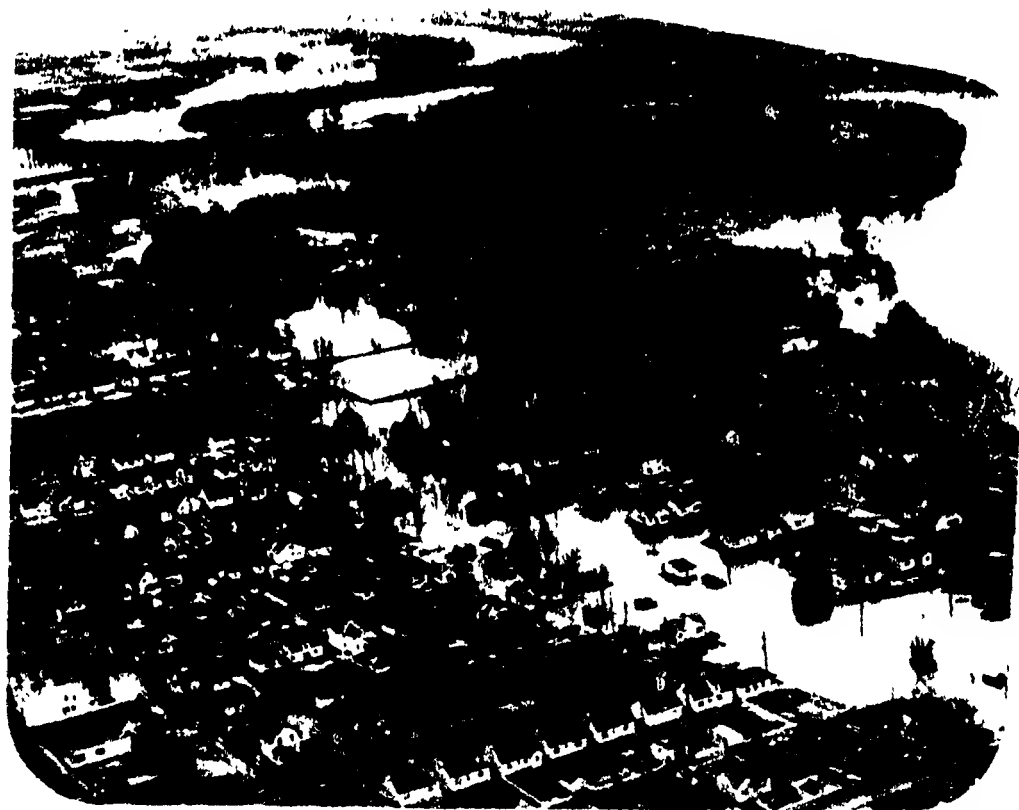
This eventuality did not arise, and only a very small amount of seepage had to be dealt with in the solidly-constructed Depot.

Despite mass evacuation of Winnipeg's hospitals, the call for blood continued, and even in the week of May 25 to 31, the weekly figure reached was approximately 160 bottles. Within the highest peak demand reached in Winnipeg standing at 325 bottles, it is readily seen that demand never fell below 50% of "normal" consumption.

With the recession of flood waters, demand for blood rose from about 160 bottles in the last week of May to 264 bottles in the first week of June. Return to normal conditions was free from incidents, and donor response was not far short of the previous average level. To meet an increased demand from hospitals, clinic numbers had to be augmented somewhat and the bank worked on a small margin for a time. All demands for blood were, however, met despite this remarkably rapid rise in consumption.

BOTTLED BLOOD SUPPLIED AND USED DURING FLOOD RED CROSS BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE





THE MANITOBA FLOOD DISASTER, 1950



Condensed from a report delivered to International Red Cross by Dr. W. S. Stanbury, MBE, BA, MD, National Commissioner Canadian Red Cross Society.

DURING the month of May, 1950, the waters of the Red River reached flood levels not seen during this century, creating one of the greatest disasters in the history of the North American continent.

Early in April, warned by weather bureau reports from the United States, the Disaster Services Committee of the Manitoba Division alerted its branches at Emerson and Morris as well as Red Cross representatives in smaller communities along the river warning of coming flood. The division convened a meeting of representatives from the provincial and municipal governments, Army, R.C.M.P. at which a flood co-ordinating committee was formed, with Mr. Frank Carpenter, of Red Cross Disaster Services Committee, as chairman.

By the middle of April flooding was reported across the border and Mr. Carpenter immediately took steps to send in relief supplies, flat-bottomed boats, waders and tank cars of drinking water. The R.C.M.P. set up short wave radio communications along the river. Arrangements were made with the Canadian National Railway to send sleepers and a dining car to Morris.

Early in May, Morris was faced with a critical situation and total evacuation became necessary. This settlement of 1,100 people within a few days had shrunk to 25, comprised of Mounted Police, Red Cross representatives, and public utilities agents. Only one building in town, the court house, was without water on its first story, and here Red Cross headquarters was located. Before the end of flood, 41 houses were completely wrecked in this community.

Up to Friday, May 5, the Red Cross Disaster Committee had been operating in complete co-operation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Army, and various government and municipal departments along the lines which proved so effective during the floods of 1948. Special commendation is due to Mr. Frank Carpenter and Mr. R. H. Snyder, Manitoba Divisional Commissioner, who almost single-handedly had borne the heavy load up to this time.

However, it soon became evident that Greater Winnipeg was threatened with a major disaster and on Friday, May 5, the Manitoba government requested the Federal Minister of Defence, to place the flood effort under the direction of Brigadier R. E. A. Morton, general officer commanding prairie command.

As the crisis sharpened, responsibilities of Red Cross for evacuation and emergency aid rapidly increased, and on Monday, May 8, preliminary steps were taken to enlarge the basic disaster organization and set up ancillary departments. These were placed under chairmanship of leading younger business executives in Winnipeg. President of Manitoba Division, R. G. B. Dickson, made the initial choice of these executives and by noon, May 9, the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium had been set up as Red Cross Disaster Relief headquarters and Evacuee Reception centre.

During these early days we were extremely fortunate in having the advice and assistance of Mr. Colin Herrle, National Administrator, Disaster Services, American National Red Cross. Mr. Herrle accompanied the National Commissioner to Winnipeg on Sunday, May 7. From his arrival until his departure, June 5, Mr. Herrle was a source of strength not only to his Red Cross colleagues but to Army and government officials as well.

It is estimated that some 160,000 persons were evacuated from the greater Winnipeg area, and at one period Red Cross provided emergency aid for some 20,000 persons, and was directly responsible for evacuation of more than 5,500 persons. The Society supervised some 120 evacuation centres and undertook the responsibility for evacuation of all Winnipeg hospitals except one maintained as an emergency unit.

For a period of three weeks, some 4,000 Red Cross volunteers worked in the disaster headquarters, the dike canteens, shelters and in the many tasks which fell the lot of Red Cross.

One of the outstanding accomplishments of the disaster operation was the remarkable success of the Welfare Enquiry section which satisfactorily traced every person for whom an enquiry was received. Enquiries came from all over the United States and Canada as well as from Great Britain and other countries of Europe. In many instances only maiden names were given and in no occasion did the amateur investigators fail to find the answer.

On the main floor of the auditorium evacuees were fed, clothed and provided with emergency shelter, while I.O.D.E. dispersed vast quantities of used clothing, supplemented by new clothing and bedding either donated to or purchased by Red Cross.

As buses, planes and trains became available for departure, contingents were marshalled through the P.A. system in English, French, German and Ukrainian. At least one graduate nurse as well as volunteer registrars accompanied each train. Evacuees were given a supply of stamped form

postcards, printed in English and French, to notify friends and relatives of their temporary domicile.

Although Mr. Herrle has publicly referred to the Manitoba Disaster as "probably the greatest disaster relief operation yet seen on the North American continent", the situation was far less serious than it might have been had the Red River risen another one or two feet. Had this taken place, the main thoroughfares of Winnipeg would have been flooded, public utilities would have failed, and the city would have been uninhabitable. A special planning committee under Brigadier R. S. Malone drafted "Operation Blackboy" which provided the modus operandi for such an eventuality. Red Cross, under this plan, would have had heavy responsibility not only for the evacuation of some 250,000 people at the rate of 50,000 per day, but in feeding these evacuees in specified centres throughout Manitoba and neighboring provinces of Saskatchewan, Ontario and Alberta.

Impressed by the magnitude of the operation being executed, high officials of our own department of national defence, as well as officers of the American army, the American public health service, and the American national security resources board, visited the city, realizing the lessons which might be learned in Manitoba suitable to a civil defense program for both countries.

Foreseeing the return of families to their homes as the flood crest passed, Red Cross organized a corps of trained welfare workers to receive returning evacuees and minister to their needs. We were extremely fortunate in being loaned the services of Miss Bessie Touzel, assistant executive director, Canadian Welfare Council. Miss Touzel and her corps, selected from the local professional groups, interviewed 300 to 400 families per day during much of a period of some eight weeks.

While the emergency period had drawn to a close, much was done in the post disaster period. Great destruction was wrought to domestic and farm buildings and much loss of personal and household effects took place. While under present policy this is not the immediate responsibility of the Canadian Red Cross Society and rests with special relief funds and governmental agencies, it is not too difficult to forecast the time when the state will no longer be willing to assume the paternalistic role and take over the function of an altruistic insurer against all loss, irrespective of individual means. When this occurs and the country demands a relief agency equipped to do a complete job of emergency aid, reestablishment and rehabilitation on the basis of true need, then may the Canadian Red Cross Society be ready to meet this challenge.





THE FLOOD IN PICTURES

In addition to being told in words, the flood of 1950 was recorded in many thousands of photographs, each of which was a small section of the vast mosaic pattern of flood and flood fighting activities.

Here were recorded the contrasts, the sometimes beautiful motion of men and machines at work, the panic, the urgency, the pathos represented by the experiences of people in a great disaster. Here too was the capturing of those little moments in which things happen that are representative of a whole gamut of human experience.

Red Cross organized its own photo section, and that section produced an historical record of the flood that will place on file the entire story. Produced on the following pages are a selection of those photographs, which it is hoped will help the reader to relive the big and little events that were part of the greatest flood disaster in Canadian history.

Numbers took on a new meaning to many Manitobans during the flood. Here were thousands of persons to be fed, thousands to be housed, thousands to be moved, thousands in the final stages to be clothed and rehabilitated. In each of these tasks, Red Cross staff and volunteers performed a noble job to meet an unprecedented demand.

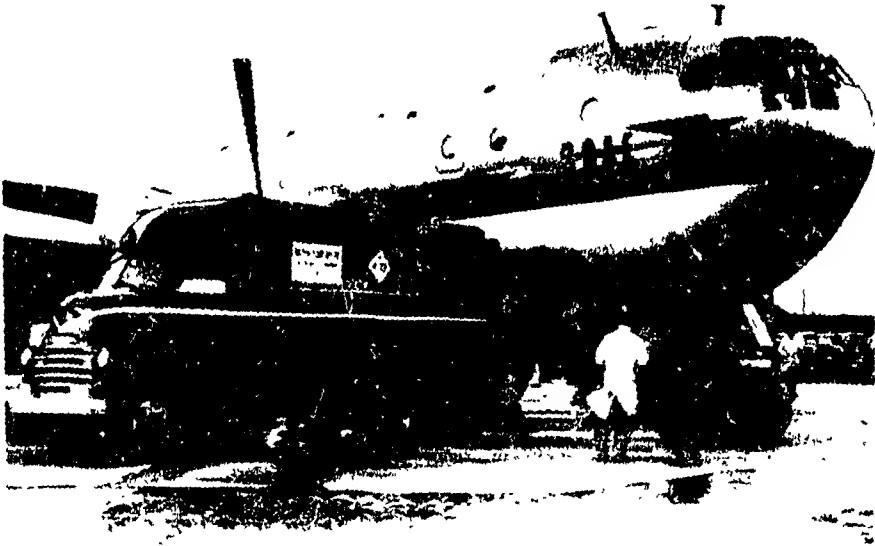




Among the most bewildered victims of the flood were the children. Torn from their normal lives, they were thrust on the mercy of circumstance, and with their parents came under the protective wing of the Red Cross. Here they found ready hands to dry tears, offer comfort, warmth, sympathy and entertainment. Here are the most poignant fragments of the disaster story.

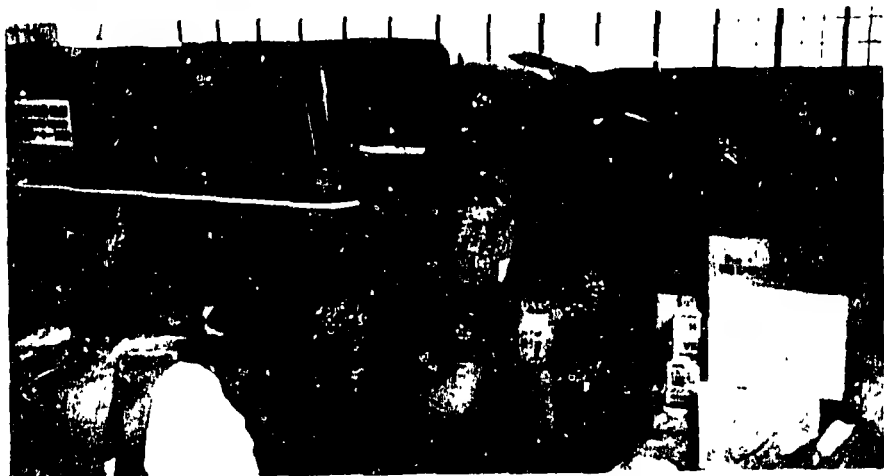






A giant man-made bird came winging into Manitoba, bringing with it the sympathy, friendship and assistance of the British people. Nowhere during the flood were the strong ties of history and kinship which binds the people of Britain and of Canada close together more dramatically displayed than in the airlifting of many tons of aid by British Overseas Airways Corporation air liner which eventually were distributed to those needing aid by Red Cross.





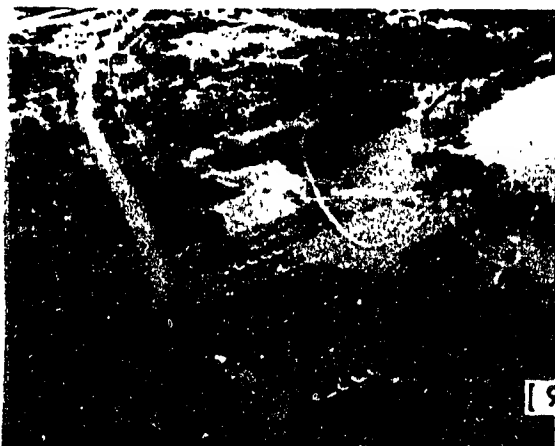


The creative mind sees beauty even in disaster, and the magic of the camera captured many scenes of beauty in Winnipeg during the flood. Men, machines and water, immobile or in action combined to capture the mood of tenseness, of power, or of silent waiting that marked the hours when disaster threatened.





Water . . . in all directions.
Whether it was seen from the
ground or air, the flood stretched
crippling tentacles to claim new
prizes. Only from the air, how-
ever, could the full scope of the
disaster be appreciated.





The flood disrupted the peaceful autumn years of the old, and theirs was a difficult lot. And after the flood, many of the old returned to their homes to find their meagre worldly possessions sudden and moldering. While flood waters rose, Red Cross sought and found refuge for the aged, and as the waters receded aided them to find rehabilitation.







Published by
Manitoba Division
CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY